

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Duluth, Georgia, USA

Gas South Arena

## Syracuse Orange Coach Felisha

## Legette-Jack

## Uche Izoje

## Laila Phelia

### Postgame Press Conference

Syracuse 70, California 59

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: What a tough game. It's two coaches that really wanted an opportunity to continue on and represent their respective universities. I'm just really grateful for how our 15 players stuck together and didn't let each other down. We understood there was going to be valleys and hills, and we were going to have to figure out how to navigate through that.

The third quarter, Cal gave us a real strong punch. We back pedaled but didn't go down. Other people stepped up and just really proud of the relentless effort our players showed.

**Q. The game was very, very physical. What's your preference in terms of how your team wants to play? Do you prefer the physical game or a little lighter?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: I prefer consistency. So we're blue collar, so if it's going to be physical, I'm okay with that. If it's going to be hands off, we can adjust.

It got physical, and we adjusted to the physicality, but we didn't back away, either, and I think that's what made it really interesting to see because I really felt like our team got 1 percent better. Because in some games we play, it got physical, it got stretched where the press came and we kind of looked around like Oh, my goodness.

We had turnovers. I looked in their eyes and they were like Next. Let's defend. Turn it over again? Next let's defend.



It says a little bit about young ladies are womaning up right now, and they're on our team.

**Q. You lost Dom in the second half and in turn Uche really stepped up down the stretch. For her to do that on this type of stage, how impressed were you with her today?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: She's stepped up from the beginning. She wanted more this than I thought about. She wanted that ball right away and we tried to give it to her right away. We had one turnover from the beginning and our players didn't stop going to her, and she was just ready to impose herself on the game.

And that's the sign of a player that got the backup of 14 other sisters who really believe that when you go, you've got to go, and you go until you don't have anything left. That's when Laila went and did her dippy-doodle and that's when Dom hit her shot, and that's when Sophie did her thing.

And then it got to a point -- it got too long before she got touches in that third quarter when Dom went out, and we made some calls. Coach KC, I thought he was going to get a technical coming after me. He's like get Uche the ball. And he's our offensive coordinator and he gave us a couple plays to run. And it took a collective unit to really do what we did, and Uche started us off. She dropped a little bit in the middle because we went another direction, but at the end she came through like a big-time player that she is. I think she's a national player.

**Q. Uche, I was just wondering what was going through your head down the stretch as you took over the game in the fourth quarter?**

UCHE IZOJE: The fourth quarter I felt so -- because all the openers were scoring, I felt -- it's not give up, but every time in that kind of situation, I always freeze up. But before the game, I already told my teammates, once they see me like that, they should talk to me. So I had so many voices saying -- I was like, no, I've got to pick it up, so yeah, they really helped me.



**Q. Coach, when you took that time-out after Cal trimmed the lead to about five with about six minutes left, what was the message to the team when they came out and fed Uche and got it back to about a nine point lead after that?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: There was a song on and I just sat in front of them and started dancing. Like guys, you thought they were going to let us punch them in the mouth and not fight back? They came back with their best punch and that's all they've got and we've still got the lead. All we've got to do is knock them out and punch back. I looked at Coach KC, he gave us a couple plays to run, and it was just incredible because now we put Uche at the pinch post and we had Coop down low, who's a rebounding juggernaut. And Uche knew she could shoot confidently because we had people down low to rebound.

It's just one thing about the ACC and women's basketball, there is no one going to be a 30-point lead because every single team is great. We've been the No. 1 conference in the country for years and years in a row. This year we're not in the top 1, but we're still in the top 3. And it's because my colleagues, they're serious. They're really, really good. But Syracuse is really good, too.

**Q. I know it's pretty early, but what can you say about Dom and Liv's status?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: I told Dom she's got two hands; play with the other one. She's going to have to play and she will play. Liv is going to have to play, and we'll figure it all out.

I don't know, honestly. We have an incredible trainer in Ms. Karen. Ms. Karen is the head coach when it comes to injuries, and if she says -- it's just next person up. My prayer is that they're healthy enough to go again against an incredibly good team in Louisville. If not, we're just going to have to give Louisville our best effort with the people that can go.

**Q. Coach, you probably are looking to the next game, but what does it mean to get your first ACC Tournament win as a coach at Syracuse?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Well, we've been fighting for a long time. It's the fourth year. This team is so special, guys. So we give out the Bank of America hardhat after every game, and of course I'm always thinking about the team. The mother hen is always thinking about the team. It's not for the kids to think about the mother.

And this chick on the left side here, Laila Pheilia, she made

it very obvious that this was something that they believed in, too. They wanted to get this win for me to get that monkey off my back a little bit. I brought these unbelievable people here to help navigate that. She made it very clear that Bank of America hardhat belonged to this crazy lady here that yells at them every day and talks in their face.

It's the sign of a family that's growing together. And that's why we want to keep winning, because the more you win, the more we stay together. It seemed like yesterday we got it together, and I don't want this to end because it's just more things I'm learning about these young ladies that I just adore. I know they're going to be in my life for the rest of my life. But through this basketball game, we came together, so let's just ride this thing until the wheels fall off.

**Q. You just talked about a little bit wanting to continue. Obviously you know what happened last month when you played Louisville. What do you want to do differently or what do you have to do differently, key in on to make it more in your favor this time?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: I don't have a clue what we're going to do differently. I've got some great coaches in Adair, Moore, and KC and Caleb. They're going to pull a game plan together and I'm going to follow their lead. And I'm going to talk some defensive strategies a little bit and collectively we're going to come up with a game plan.

But right now we just had the first in four years of a victory, and we're going to celebrate this for the next three hours and really enjoy wins. That's something that people don't do. People don't think you have time to enjoy success. I say you dance in the ring, but when you have an opportunity when the sun shines, you enjoy that vitamin D a little bit.

That's what we're trying to do right now and we're going to figure out an incredible team that's in my opinion a team that's going to go deep in the NCAA Tournament. But we've got to figure out -- we've just got to be better for 40 minutes, and my coaches are going to come up with a game plan to make that make sense.

**Q. What was it like trying to adjust the offense on the fly once Dom went down from your perspective in that second half?**

LAILA PHEILIA: I felt like the biggest thing for me, after seeing Dom go down, it was more so just like we have to come together, like, the team. We have to talk to each other. We need to communicate and everything, and we need to have Dom's back out there because I did not agree with the call. We went out there and handled our business.



**Q. You mentioned wanting to celebrate this one for the next three hours. What do the next 18 hours, 24 hours look like for you guys?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: I don't know. I can sit here and lie to you. I don't do that well. I'm very honest; I have no idea. I have not been to the second game. Come on, man, you want to keep bringing that in my face? Geez.

My coaches are going to navigate me, navigate the team. We're going to get these young ladies in cold plunges, showered up, fed, and we're going to be up all night trying to figure this thing out. If this was Louisville, Duke, or NC State or North Carolina, they'll know what to do because they've been doing this multiple game thing here, and it's my first time. I'm wet behind the ears.

But I'll tell you, the ball will go up in the air and our team is going to be prepared.

**Q. For either of the two players, what do you guys remember about the regular season game against Louisville that you can take into tomorrow?**

UCHE IZOJE: I would say during the first and second quarter, we didn't bring our best. Our defense was bad. We didn't bring aggressiveness to the court. But I feel like the third quarter and fourth quarter we brought so much aggressiveness. If we bring it first and second quarter, I feel like -- it would not be like how they beat us the last time. Next game, first quarter and second quarter, we need to bring our best defensively.

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Defensively we did great, we just couldn't score. Can you score tomorrow first quarter?

UCHE IZOJE: Yes, Coach.

**Q. The last time you guys played Cal was another close game. You dominated the first half. Second half got a little close, went to triple overtime. What do you think you've learned from that game against them back in January that you tried to apply tonight, and how do you think they ended up being similar?**

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: They're a good team. She does a great job. Charmin got some thoroughbreds, an incredible post player, but we have a great one, too, and the poise we brought, the poise from Laila -- I was trying to call time-outs. I'm looking at them, but Sophie got the ball in, gave it to Sophie. We cleared it out, gave it to Liv, cleared it out, and they were able to break the press. And I was able to walk out of here with two time-outs.

I was prepared to call it, but they were so ready to really impose themselves on the game. And you're not going to decide who we are anymore. We're going to decide. If you have to win the game by more points than us, at least the decision that we're going to make is that we're coming to you, through you, the way we do when it's Syracuse basketball style.

They made me believe that we deserve it, too. So it's not going to be clean. It's not going to be cute. Two of our kids went down. But nobody looked like, oh, my God. No, they just said, next person up, finish, and they finished, and I'm just so proud.

We had about two hours and 30 minutes to say good things to them, but after we watch that film we're going to see some things we've got to fix.

Thank you so much for what you do. ACC basketball is alive and well; this is a game that is indicative of that. Thank you.

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