

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 4, 2021  
Greenville, South Carolina, USA

## Mississippi State Bulldogs Nikki McCray-Penson Postgame Press Conference



LSU 71, Mississippi State 62

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Coach Nikki McCray-Penson. We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. In the game, the field-goal percentage was right there with LSU for most of the contest. They just hit one too many threes, got to the free-throw line more. Do you feel like that was the biggest difference for your team in the loss this afternoon?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: I think definitely getting to the free-throw line, we were not disciplined on that point. Two days we worked on angles in practice, our closeouts. That was one of our keys. Our closeouts had to be really great. Some were and some were not.

We fouled them too much. They hit some threes. We knew who their three-point shooters were, definitely 14. We knew she was a three-point shooter. We just didn't have a hand up. That was knowing-your-personnel type of thing. I told our team, I said, Everybody at this tournament wants to win. It's not about wanting to win, you got to do the things that it's going to take to win. We just lost her from that standpoint and we fouled too much.

**Q. What did LSU do on the defensive end that kind of stymied you guys? Looked at times you wanted to space them out a little bit. LSU stymies teams. What did you they do to stymie you?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: I said it before, LSU makes you play a certain way. I thought when we were at their place, we controlled the tempo. They really controlled the tempo of this game. We wanted to attack. When we got the rebounds, we were pushing tempo, it was really good. I felt like we had an advantage because they couldn't guard us because they like to set up in their press.

We also talked about getting the ball in the press and not setting up. I thought we set up too much in our press instead of just attacking them. Then we had some open looks tonight, had some wide-open looks that we just did not hit.

**Q. Obviously there's been a lot of ebbs and flows this year. Forgive me if this is frank, but right now do you feel like this team is a tournament team? If so, what has to change heading into post-season play?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: Definitely I do think we have some quality wins. The fact that we had such a long break, I'm hoping that the committee would take that into consideration. That breaks the rhythm of any team. That's just something we could not control. We started to get a rhythm there. We beat an LSU team on the road at their place. That was huge for us.

Again, for us, we'll have a break. It's not like it's something that we're not used to. But just to regroup, to get our bodies right, just continue to work.

I thought our shot selection was much better tonight. I thought we rebounded the ball better tonight. That was something that we addressed. But we just fouled. It was discipline when it came to fouling. We gave No. 14 too many threes.

**Q. Coach, it was still pretty much a game till mid-fourth quarter. Do you think your team has an issue being able to fight more down the stretch, not give up or kind of let that mental block get to them in the end?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: I thought we turned the ball over. There was times where it was crucial turnovers in that third quarter that really cost us. I thought we outscored them in the fourth quarter.

But when you have some momentum going, it's those turnovers that just break your back. You're like, ugh. We missed some shots right there at the rim, but we got the shots that we wanted. It just didn't fall our way. It just did not fall our way.

Again, down the stretch we did foul.

**Q. What did you think was the catalyst of those turnovers? Was that trying to make quick decisions? What was the deal with that?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: I think just making the easy play. LSU's zone, they're so long and they're so athletic, especially in their press, people look open, but they're not open. It is just making the right reads.

**Q. Obviously the players on this team are a little bit more used to long trips to Greenville. What do you say to some of these veterans about an early exit, not going into March with a little bit more momentum?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: Definitely. I think we all are. My time here being as a player, as an assistant coach, I think the thing -- I went in and said, Hey, you know, we're going to prepare. We just got to stay ready.

Obviously we're disappointed. We felt like this was a game that we could win. We needed to do some things right. They made some adjustments. We made some adjustments. We needed to be solid in those adjustments. Just came up short on the short end of the stick there.

Hey, just told them, We're just going to keep working.

**Q. We didn't see Aliyah in the second half. She picked up the technical at the end. Was that the reasoning for it? How did that go down?**

NIKKI McCRAY-PENSON: Definitely a coach's decision.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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