

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 5, 2021

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Texas A&M Aggies

Ciera Johnson

Postgame Press Conference



Texas A&M 77, LSU 58

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Ciera Johnson. Questions, please.

Q. I know LSU has been a thorn in your side over the last couple years, but now back-to-back wins. How gratifying was it to come out and perform today against a team like that, especially after you won the championship on Sunday?

CIERA JOHNSON: It just feels good. We knew that after Sunday, we celebrated, we were on our high horse for Monday. Then Tuesday when we got back to work and practice, we have to realize we have to move on. We were just waiting around to see who was going to win between Mississippi State and LSU. We got the matchup with LSU. That's a matchup we're willing to take.

They're a good team. I thought we did what we needed to do today to come out victorious, and we did that.

Q. Do you feel like the team maybe in the first quarter got off to a slow start because of the layoff? Seems like you got better as the game went on.

CIERA JOHNSON: I mean, if you look at the majority of the games yesterday, with the exception of Alabama, every team came off a little sluggish, shots not falling. Just have to get comfortable with the gym, get comfortable with the rims. It's not like we're home and away. It took us a little bit to get going. Once we got going, I thought we did a good job of sharing the ball. Everybody doing their job today. I think everybody did a good job of playing their role and we did a really good job of playing hard, which is what we need to do against them.

Q. What kind of a lift did Alexis give you off the bench today?

CIERA JOHNSON: Lex, that's what she does. That's what she does. She comes out and she changes the tempo for us. She's looking to push. She can really score the ball offensively. So we needed every one of her points today. We definitely needed that boost off the bench. All practice and pregame, we've been talking about energy, energy, energy. She brought the energy for us.

Q. A lot of paint points today, all the guards driving in there. What do you make of attacking that LSU zone, getting into the paint today?

CIERA JOHNSON: I thought the first half it was the Me and N'dea show. The second half the guards found their way and they took over for us. I feel like we had a really good balance inside. We were just, like, in the past we've been very hesitant when we played LSU. I thought today we were in attack mode. It paid off for us.

Q. A day where Aaliyah Wilson only has two points, other people that don't follow you like we do are like, Oh, my God, they struggled. Speaks volumes of how many weapons y'all have.

CIERA JOHNSON: She had two points, but she had 15 rebounds. Wilson was the player of the game to me. Even though she wasn't scoring the ball, she did everything else on the defensive end, rebounding, hustle plays. She brought great energy today. Just because she didn't score the ball, like you said, we have so many different weapons. Anybody can step up any given day.

Q. I wanted to know how crucial it was for Aaliyah Wilson to grab the 15 rebounds, leading the way in the paint battle?

CIERA JOHNSON: I mean, I'm not going to lie, when she was getting every offensive free-throw rebound you could. I was like when we miss a free throw, I'm like dang. I see Wilson come out of nowhere and get the ball. Yeah, we got the ball.

She said, man, she had a feeling when the shots weren't falling, she said, Shots ain't falling, what else can I do? We

needed every single one of our rebounds. She was my player of the game today.

Q. That was funny you said that because Gary was in a postgame interview and said you were his coach on the court. I also see Jordan Nixon as being kind of a coach on the court. How do your roles fit together? How did you mentally shift gears? I know this is a second season for you from the joy of Sunday to getting right back into it with a whole new mindset today.

CIERA JOHNSON: In practice we just kind of -- we establish our roles. The coaches kind of help us out with that role. I feel like all year we've kind of -- everybody has been kind of their role has been defined a little bit more, a little bit more, a little bit more. It's not on us. Like me and N'dea, sometimes it's not on us to come in and get the ball every possession. Sometimes we got to set a lot of screens. That's what the guards need. The guards have to hit shot.

Sometimes the guards have to pound it inside to us. I think everybody does a great job of accepting what the game plan is for that game, accepting the role and we go on from there.

The follow-up question, yeah, our motto all year has been one game at a time. We're not looking past any team because we know this is a wide-open tournament, a wide-open season. Any given day any given team can beat you if you're not ready to play.

After Monday we had our day off. Tuesday we came back in. Coach Starkey made the point, don't let that be the highlight of our season. I think we did a good job today of focusing and moving on.

Q. How confident do you feel now that you've got the tournament going and you had this performance today against LSU?

CIERA JOHNSON: I feel like right now our confidence is really good. But, I mean, confidence can only take you so far. You have to come out and compete every single day. Because we got a Kentucky and Georgia team waiting on us. Those teams are very scary.

I mean, yes, we're confident. Confidence does help. We have to be willing to come out and play hard every single night.

Q. What do you do between now and tomorrow afternoon to get ready to go and make sure you're ready to play on back-to-back days?

CIERA JOHNSON: We're going to rest. We're going to kick off feet up. We're not doing anything. Not going to be too much walking around and stuff. We're going to get into some Normatec boots. We're getting off of our feet. Whether Kentucky or Georgia wins, it's going to be all about transition defense. We have to be springing back. It's going to be a track meet tomorrow, whichever team, because both teams like to run and both teams are very physical. So we're going to be off our feet.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

CIERA JOHNSON: Thank you, guys. Y'all have a good day.

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