

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 5, 2021

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

## South Carolina Gamecocks

## Zia Cooke

### Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 75, Alabama 63

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with the South Carolina postgame press conference.

**Q. You guys come out hot, up 27 with four minutes to go from halftime, then down to 7 in the fourth. What went on in the second half there?**

ZIA COOKE: I think we kind of got relaxed a little bit. Lewis, she got off a lot. She started to notice what she could do, bring the lead down. We just had to pick up our defense. I feel like we got a little bit relaxed.

Also the wind, we were tired out there. The air here is, like, crazy. But we picked it back up towards the end of the game.

**Q. Going back to the hot start, Dawn talked about how she really wanted to make sure you guys hit first. How good was that to get off to as good a start as you guys did?**

ZIA COOKE: It felt good. We were smiling the whole time. It just feels good when you're able to play like that, have good things going on as a team.

We've been making sure we're locked in, listening to Coach, and paying attention to the details. Everything that we were doing in practice we translated it to the game and it worked out for us.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about getting back in the tournament now. Gamecocks are defending champions. Crunch time now.**

ZIA COOKE: Basically we're just trying to stay the course, stay levelheaded out there. We know that we did win the SEC tournament last year, but right now we're the



underdogs. We just got to make our point and let the world know who we are.

**Q. You guys were incredibly locked in for about the first 15 minutes, as locked in as I've seen you all season. After that it reverted back to a lot of the uneven play, missed easy shots. What is it going to take for you guys to be able to lock in for 40 minutes?**

ZIA COOKE: Experience. Right now we're experiencing something new. Like you said, we haven't played like that in a while. It's a new experience for us. We're just trying to make sure we continuing to do that.

We're not going to be perfect right off the bat but we're learning each and every game.

**Q. Is it a relief to get the first win under your belt here, especially coming off the loss to Texas A&M? Now you can settle down and play I guess maybe a little more at ease.**

ZIA COOKE: Definitely not, no. We definitely are not at ease. We're going to play each game the same way. Like I said, we're the underdogs; no one likes that. We got a point to prove. We're not at ease. We're going to keep the course and keep moving.

**Q. Watching y'all's game from the first half, y'all were definitely feeling it as everyone has said. When did you start feeling it for yourself personally? Was it before or after your turnaround bucket in the early second quarter? That was a nice shot.**

ZIA COOKE: I think my teammates had me feeling it. Seeing them knock down shots, just seeing us all do well as a unit, it made me feel good. It's just better when everyone eats. That's something we're trying to continue to do, move the ball, make sure everyone is happy, and of course get the dub.

**Q. It's a different experience for you guys this year. Obviously you had seniors to lean on this year. You and Destanni and Aliyah, being this next group up, how is it for you guys now being in the driver's seat**



**having a lead, having to weather those storms where teams like Alabama come back?**

ZIA COOKE: It was hard at first, just talking about from the beginning of the year, just making an adjustment. We don't have Ty and Kiki any more. They were the ones leading us out there.

It took us quite a while to understand we were the ones that needed to step up to the plate. Like I said, game by game we're getting better and better. Yeah, that's it. Sorry (laughter).

**Q. When Alabama cut it to 7, then Destanni Henderson made that three to get the lead back up to 10, was that kind of the momentum shift that you needed?**

ZIA COOKE: Definitely. Definitely was a momentum shift. It was in flow. I knew she would be right there ready for the shot. We've been working on one more pass, and it was there. So definitely.

**Q. How hard has it been all season long you were the ones that everybody was hunting out to get, now you've had to change roles to the underdogs. Talk a little bit about that.**

ZIA COOKE: I actually enjoy being the underdog because you get a chance to show the world who you really are. While they're asleep, you get a chance to wake them up. That's definitely our plans right now, wake the world up and let them know who we are.

I don't want to be too cocky. Stay humble (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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