

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 6, 2021
Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Georgia Bulldogs

Joni Taylor

Postgame Press Conference



Georgia 74, Texas A&M 68

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Georgia head coach Joni Taylor. We'll take questions, please.

Q. I'll ask one of the more obvious questions: The difference between this game and the regular season meeting against Texas A&M?

JONI TAYLOR: First of all, Texas A&M is such a tough team. They're the No. 2 team in the country for a reason. They stretch us. They challenge us. They gave us a huge battle tonight.

To answer your question, Jenna Staiti played 12 minutes in the regular season. Tonight she played 35 minutes. She has 13 points, six blocked shots. Her presence on the floor is a game changer for us. Even when she's not scoring, she's a rim protector, she rebounds, she stretches the defense for us, offensively stretches the floor. That was the first thing I would say.

Also we're playing a lot better now than when we did in January when we met up with Texas A&M the first time around. We're shooting the ball better, more balanced offensively. We're really set in what it is we're doing.

Q. Can you go through the emotions of making it to a championship game? Your birthday is tomorrow, so is it good to be spending your birthday coaching a championship game?

JONI TAYLOR: Extremely happy for the program. We haven't made it to a championship game since 2004. I was an assistant coach at Troy, Alabama living off of ramen noodles and peanut butter and jelly in 2004.

To be doing this now, I'm really happy for the program. I think about Coach Landers, I think about the text

messages I got from Teresa Edwards, Saudia Roundtree, Lisa O'Connor. Just the commitment they have to us, several others for that matter.

I'm happy for our present team. Our seniors especially. We talk about checking boxes. We're just continuing to do that. They're doing it the right way.

It's something we obviously are going to enjoy today. We're not going to act like it's not a big deal, but it is a big deal. It's a big deal for us, our program. We got to settle in, get ready to face the winner of the 6:00 game.

Q. I was wondering how Mikayla bounced back so quickly. It looked like she was pretty significantly hurt when she went down, helped off the court.

JONI TAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, it scared me to death. She's someone who has had injuries in the past. She's had a torn ACL. She knows when she's hurt. She's a really tough kid. She had a torn labrum and chose not to have surgery. We know she's an extremely tough young lady. When she went down that, I was extremely worried. Credit our trainer Stacey Kisil for getting her ready to go, taping her up. She had a tremendous third and fourth quarter for us obviously.

Q. Does she flash that kind of style in practice? Do you see her doing that during workouts? Is this really one of the first times we're seeing it in a big spot like this for you guys?

JONI TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. This is par for the course for Mikayla, absolutely. This is what she does, who she is. I think she went through a spell in the SEC season where she -- I mean, again, for all practical purposes, this is the first time Mikayla has had this type of responsibility on the basketball floor. So I think she did hit a wall around end of January, beginning of February as we were in SEC play. Credit her for getting in the film room, for getting in with Coach Karen and figuring out how people were guarding her, finding another way to score.

Again, when Jenna is on the floor, shooting the ball, it opens up things for her. She's continued to stay the



course and be aggressive. When Mikayla is aggressive, she's hard to stop. Her first step is so quick, she's someone who affects the basketball on both ends of the floor.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

JONI TAYLOR: I didn't really hear you. I think you're asking me about the second quarter when Texas A&M made their run, how we recovered and got everybody back going? Was that your question? I really couldn't hear you.

Q. How did you get the emotions back in the second quarter (indiscernible)?

JONI TAYLOR: I can't hear you. I can't hear you, I'm sorry. It's hard to understand. We'll call you, okay? I just can't hear you. I'm sorry.

THE MODERATOR: On that note, we'll wrap things up. Thank you for joining us tonight. We appreciate you joining us. We'll see you tomorrow.

JONI TAYLOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports