

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 6, 2021

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

## South Carolina Gamecocks

### Dawn Staley

#### Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 67, Tennessee 52

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to continue with South Carolina, Coach Dawn Staley. We'll take questions.

**Q. Looked like a very deliberate, patient approach offensively tonight, get the ball to Aliyah and let everything flow from there. Were you impressed with how the team managed to stay with that throughout the majority of 40 minutes?**

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, I mean, I was impressed with our team. I think our team is growing and they're learning. I mean, it took us probably to lose some basketball games, just our offense stagnant in some games to really understand what we were trying to accomplish.

I take my hat off to our players being able to embrace it and not feel like you're taking the ball out of someone's hands to put in somebody else's, taking touches away from everyone.

Our young players are learning how to play. When they learn how to play, everybody is going to feel like they can get a shot at any time. So super proud of them.

Two-thirds of the way done. We want to win another SEC tournament championship. We put ourselves in this position.

**Q. Second game in a row you got off to the hot start. Huge lead at the end of one. Talk about that. In the fourth quarter, do you think there was some fatigue playing a high-intensity game back-to-back nights?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, terrific start. I mean, if you want -- I'll take that start. I'll take the fast start like we have over the past two days in any of our games. You can manage it a little bit better throughout the rest of the game.



But, you know, it was probably a little fatigue, but it was fatigue on both parts. I think both teams just gave it up. When you play in this league, you have to give your all or else you'll put yourself in a position where people can go on a 12-0 run and make it a game again. We went through that yesterday.

But, you know, a great win against a tough Tennessee team who will be NCAA bound. Hopefully we can play as well as we played, or play better, put four quarters together tomorrow when the SEC tournament championship is on the line.

**Q. Tonight's game was a very physical game. There's been times this year that we have talked about the team being too nice. Do you feel good about the way your team stood up, even Zia got a technical? I know as a coach that's probably one you don't mind actually standing their ground. Do you think their team grew up a lot by standing their ground tonight?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, I like the grit that we played with tonight. Just defensively I thought we were just engaged throughout the entire night. We made it very difficult for them to score. When they got easy opportunities, they bobbled the ball. That was probably just over the course of 40 minutes with them having to play and fight tooth and nail to get a basket.

I like what our defense was able to do. I like some of the things that we're doing offensively, getting off to a fast start. I thought we got good looks at the basket. Again, we just didn't finish layups. If we finished layups, I thought we could have won by a lot more than we did.

**Q. Maybe you didn't play quite up to the offensive standards you want. You keep the lead above 13 for most of the second half. Does that give you more confidence into the next game or does it not really matter?**

DAWN STALEY: It doesn't matter. You're playing in the SEC where no lead is safe. I mean, Georgia got out to a big lead today, Texas A&M came climbing back and took

the lead. We got off to a big lead. They got into our lead throughout the game.

I was really happy about our players just hitting big shots. Henny was big, hitting crucial threes down the stretch. Zia was attacking. Aliyah was just as strong.

LeLe played great and inspired defensively and offensively. I think she had four assists, a couple of baskets. Super proud of everybody just coming together and playing some of our better basketball.

**Q. What do you think the impact from the Gamecock fans in the stadium tonight was? Do you think it gave the team a little extra energy, especially in the first quarter?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, this particular game felt a little bit different than our normal games. Even at the Colonial Life Arena they were there. They were spread out, but we heard them. Like, we got a little extra burst because when Tennessee was coming back, they were cheering us on. When we were making our run, they were just as loud. When Tennessee had to call a timeout because we went on a run, they exploded.

Yes, felt different. Loved to hear that. We've been missing that. I do believe that our players played a little bit more inspired for longer stretches because we had our fans in the stands.

**Q. You have so much experience at this point in the tournament. What is the key for the players tonight and tomorrow morning with such a quick turnaround for the championship game?**

DAWN STALEY: It's out of my hands at this point. It is our medical staff and our conditioning coach. They take over from after the game until we get ready to warm up on the floor.

A lot of rest, a lot of cold baths, refueling. Got to get back to the hotel and get some dinner in. We'll probably just get back with our players tomorrow morning to talk about how we want -- the game plan for beating Georgia tomorrow.

**Q. Last time in Knoxville Renna Davis really went off in the second half. Rae Burrell is probably their best player all year. Tonight you hold Davis to 9 and Burrell to 8. Talk about the defensive focus there. I wanted to ask if you saw anything on film when they put the ball out in front of them that they don't take care of it? It looked like at times, particularly early in the game, you kind of got some digs in there and stripped the ball out. Was that anything on the scout or that's kind of**

**the way it worked out?**

DAWN STALEY: Well, we knew going into the game that Davis and Burrell were going to take the majority of their shots. What we wanted to do is just try to get them -- just disrupt them a little bit. Not flow shots. Davis went downhill on us in the second half when we played them early in Knoxville. Burrell had her way in the first half.

We just wanted to stay in between them and the basket, not allow them to turn a corner. Force our bigs to rotate over. When we got in between them and the basket, luckily for us we're small so we could play underneath them. They're big. Once they go into their shooting motions, there's really nothing we can do besides foul them. But anything underneath, dribbling, putting two hands on the ball, we felt like if we could play underneath them, maybe we can disrupt them.

I thought we did a great job with creating that, and just creating layers to our defense. If they got by us, we stunted it, were able to get a hand in there and disrupt. I thought we did a really good job with that.

**Q. Cook, Henderson and Boston took 43 of your 63 shots. Is that something that you would like to see more players, the rest of the team shoot more, or is that a number you feel comfortable with?**

DAWN STALEY: At this point we got to win basketball games. We don't really care where the points are coming from. As long as we can work inside-out and we get reversals. At that point we will create good shots for anybody on our team.

But I like the aggressiveness of the three of them because they were very deliberate in the type of shots that they were taking. They didn't make all of them, they didn't shoot a great percentage, but they gave us opportunity to rebound, they gave us opportunity to get to the free-throw line by them fouling us.

At this point those are the three that have been putting points on the scoreboard for us, so you want your best players with the ball when the game is on the line. More than likely it will be one of them that takes a lot of shots.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

DAWN STALEY: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports