

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

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

Tennessee Lady Volunteers Kellie Harper

Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 67, Tennessee 52

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Tennessee coach Kellie Harper. We'll take questions.

Q. What do you think kind of went wrong for you late in the first quarter when South Carolina went on that 19-2 run?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, we weren't getting stops obviously. I think any time they missed a shot, they were cleaning it up on the boards.

We couldn't get clean looks. When we did get clean looks, we weren't able to score on them. We on the other end were not offensive boarding.

It really came down to execution. Obviously South Carolina did a really good job getting down and guarding and being very physical. We've got to be able to handle that a little bit better. Hopefully next time we will.

Q. How do you really just put this game behind you and start to prepare for the NCAA tournament in this next week and a half?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, well, the last timeout, I actually called to talk to our team about how we were going to finish. We knew we weren't going to pull this one out with the two and a half minutes left. But we talked about in that timeout what's next, who we are, what we can do.

I think the beauty is we put ourselves in a really good position. We've improved throughout the year. We played some really good basketball. We have an opportunity, I think we're one of the teams that have an opportunity to play a long time.

It doesn't help the hurt that we feel right now, but I want it



to help tomorrow. I want them to wake up tomorrow looking forward to what's next.

Q. You had seven foul calls in the first quarter. How much did that sort of take you out of your rhythm early?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I think it completely affected our game plan. I think it completely affected how we wanted to play, for sure. It took us out of rhythm.

That's on us. We've got to do a better job of being smart and not getting some ticky-tack fouls in those situations.

Q. It's felt like all season long when Rennia or Rae had a bad quarter, they would find a way to turn it on and adjust to the defense that was being handed to them night in, night out. What was different for them tonight?

KELLIE HARPER: I think they kept trying. Our team kept trying to find them looks. We just couldn't find looks.

Then I thought we played a little frustrated at times. I think that affected us. The clean looks that we did get, we didn't really knock those down at a high percentage.

Again, I got to credit South Carolina's defense. I thought they did a great job guarding, not guarding every other possession; they guarded every possession. So they were making it difficult not only on Rennia and Rae but on everybody. We were just trying to move the ball around, trying to figure out what we could do to find ways to put points on the board.

Q. What is your overall evaluation of your team's participation in the SEC tournament?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I think the first thing that really comes to mind is this is the first time we played two back-to-back games. I think it was good for us. I wish we would have been able to do it earlier this year, being able to turn that around quickly.

I thought we played hard. I thought our execution was



lacking at times. I thought we were a little impatient offensively. They're so excited and they want to win so bad that a lot of times we get in a hurry to try to do it all at once. I think that's an area that we can find some growth.

Defensively I thought our game plans were pretty solid. We were able to come out and execute those at times. I honestly thought our focus was actually okay. I thought our attitude was pretty good until today when we got a little frustrated on the court.

Q. You speak on that hurry. How much of the turnovers in the first half, 10, South Carolina scoring 16 points off of those turnovers, were kind of in a hurry?

KELLIE HARPER: I think a little bit of both. I think we were a little impatient at times, and then tried to make something happen that wasn't there. I think South Carolina didn't allow us to do that. That's where you've got to settle in against a really, really good defensive team. You're going to have to work. That's what we've got to be okay with right now.

Q. You obviously have this break between the SEC tournament and the NCAA. You have players who are ailing a bit. What is your game plan for the next, say, 10 days?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I'd like to do a combination of both getting them rested both mentally and physically, and I'd like to be able to check off some boxes that we are better in these areas.

Then I'd like to obviously maintain a competitive level of play with their conditioning. I think it's going to be an interesting balance in the next few days. I think they're going to be motivated. I don't worry about them coming to practice not motivated. It is a long time before we play. I tell you, some teams are going to handle this really well and some teams are not going to handle this great. We want to be a team that comes out and handles this time off, finds ways to get better, are ready to play at a really high level.

Q. I know last year ultimately the NCAA tournament didn't happen. This time a year ago you were kind of entering this timeframe in a very different mindset, not necessarily knowing if you were going to make the tournament. As much as tonight is disappointing, how nice is it knowing you go into this stretch and you know with certainty this team is in the tournament?

KELLIE HARPER: I'll be honest with you, I felt pretty confident last year. But going into this tournament, it's a

really -- what I'm excited about is I think our team is in a really good -- put ourselves in a really good position in terms of how much we improved over the season, how confident they have been.

It wasn't tonight, but we've played some good basketball. I think we've had some really good individual performances along the way. I think they understand there can still be some growth. So I feel like after tonight, we wake up tomorrow, I think we're going to be in a pretty good space.

That's what I told our team, I want them to really feel good about what they've done to put us there. This is going to hurt tonight. This is going to sting. And that is okay. We're competitive. We want to win. But then also big picture moving forward, you got to be excited about the team we're taking, and I think they are.

Q. Going off of what you just said. I know it might not feel like it right now, this loss hurts obviously, but moving forward in the NCAA tournament, how beneficial is it for your team's growth to face a team like South Carolina with how talented they are, if you were to make a tournament run?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I tell you what, the SEC has been so tough this year. I mean, night in, night out, every team. I tell you, I'm so proud of our league. We've got some great teams, great players, great coaches. I think the SEC is going to show well in the NCAA tournament.

I think that the SEC has prepared a lot of teams to go down there and to be successful. Hopefully we're one of them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

KELLIE HARPER: Thank you.

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