

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

**Vanderbilt Commodores**  
**Shea Ralph**

**Jordyn Cambridge**

**Brinae Alexander**

Postgame Press Conference



Vanderbilt 85, Texas A&M 69

**SHEA RALPH:** First of all, I just want to thank the SEC for putting on an amazing tournament. It's been wonderful so far, and we've really enjoyed our time. We're not planning on going home any time soon, even though it's right down the road, but I also want to say I'm just really proud of our team.

We've been fighting all year, and we've talked a lot with all of you, and I talk with them every day about trusting the process and believing in each other and investing in each other and knowing that the results may not come that day or the next week or the next week, but eventually we'll see them. I think that right now we're peaking at the right time. You want to be playing your best basketball in March.

This team did something special today. You could feel it on the court. These two did something really special today: The first triple-double in Vanderbilt history. From one to the other, who have been playing together since fourth grade, you know that's fate and destiny, and it's just fun to witness it.

We're not done, though. Like I said before. We're going to enjoy this moment. We're going to rest and relax and get some food in our bellies and prepare for Florida to come tomorrow and play another great game of basketball.

**Q. Jordyn, did you know that you were close to the triple-double at the end, and Brinae, did you know and how did you feel when she got it?**

**JORDYN CAMBRIDGE:** After that last timeout when there

was like 56 seconds, Coach Kev (DeMille) just said, "You need one assist." He didn't know what it was for, but I was, like, okay, one assist. So I told my team, Y'all, I need one assist. Everybody is like, "Okay. We're going to get it." We have 56 seconds. Then they kind of trapped me a little bit at half-court, and Brinae was wide open, so I just kicked it up and I kind of watched the ball go in the air, like watching the shot go in. I'm, like, oh, my gosh, and it went in. I'm, like, oh, my gosh.

It was definitely like a really good feeling. I didn't know it was the first in school history, but that's pretty awesome.

**BRINAE ALEXANDER:** I didn't know either until she said she needed an assist. I was, like, throw it up, throw it up, I got you. It worked out so well. I thought it was just a double-double. I didn't know it was for the triple-double until I did radio.

**Q. For, I guess, Jordyn and Brinae, during the first quarter when you all went on that huge run, it just seemed like the bench was going crazy, and that was one of the best stretches you all have played all season. What was that feeling like just getting up and down the court, scoring 29 points, I think, in the first quarter, and everyone was going nuts?**

**BRINAE ALEXANDER:** It felt really good. I think when we do everything right and we really buy into our energy and effort and togetherness, everything works out, and it just feels really good to celebrate with your teammates.

**JORDYN CAMBRIDGE:** Like Coach Ralph said, you play your best basketball in March. In the moment I didn't realize we scored that many points. We were just going and going and going, and I didn't realize until the quarter was over and I looked up and was, like, oh, wow. We still have three more quarters. That was really good, but we got to keep doing it because we have three more quarters. We have to try to keep that same intensity for the rest of the game.

**Q. For either of you, Texas A&M started to make a run a little bit in the third and fourth quarter. They cut it down to single digits a couple of times, but you guys**



**closed it out strong. How did you react to their run and what did you do to continue to close out the game?**

BRINAE ALEXANDER: I would say the game is a game full of runs. That's the game of basketball. There's going to be ebbs and flows. We can't just -- like if someone goes on a run, we got to turn around, get in our huddles and be, like, this is our run. That's just how we got to keep our composure.

JORDYN CAMBRIDGE: I think we've been doing a really good job our past three or four games at when teams go on a run, that's fine. Like she said, it's a game of runs. It can't be a run and then finish the game on a run. It has to be like you have your run, we get a stop, and then we have our run, and then we close it. That's the mentality that we've been having. When we have that mentality, we can do a whole lot of great things. That's what we did in this game.

**Q. For Coach: Can it be challenging, you were up 19 at the end of the first quarter, can it be challenging to be up that much and kind of balance keeping your foot on the gas while also kind of playing it safe and not forcing turnovers like that?**

SHEA RALPH: I think it's all perspective. I would much rather take that challenge than down 19, you know, after the first quarter.

So we played maybe the best quarter of basketball we have all year. We got every stop we wanted to get. Our rotations were on point, and every shot went in. You know at some point we're going to miss a shot, right, or we're not going to get a call. At some point there's going to be some deflation out of that balloon, and really that happens. The best players in the world usually only make 50% of their shots. So we're going to miss some open shots and make some mistakes on defense, but that happens, and as long as we keep our energy, like these guys say, and our effort and we're in our huddles and connected with each other, and they are connected to our staff on the bench, then we'll be fine. We'll weather any storm.

The point was making sure we got them to do what we wanted them to do when we're playing defense, and we got everything we wanted on offense, and I feel like that's how the game ended. So that was a big moment of growth for our team because it's no secret to anybody in this room that we have lost some big games down the stretch. We just weren't able to turn the corner.

Today was a big, big, big win for this group. We turned the corner when they came right for our necks, and we didn't

let them have the game.

**Q. You just talked about this was a big win because it allowed you to kind of turn the corner. For this to be your first postseason, to win a game like that, what does it do not just for this weekend, but for the long-term status of your program?**

SHEA RALPH: It's a great question. I haven't really thought about that. I think that the goal for this program -- I know that the goal -- I believe that the goal for this program is to be winning big games in March, and this is where I'm comfortable, right? I'm used to playing in March and April, and I want my players to have that expectation. I want our program to have that expectation, but the way that you do that is that you train for those moments. You don't just come to March and say, all right, this is the time we turn it on. No, you've got to turn it on in September and October. So every time we come on the basketball court we're training and preparing for the next game like it's our Final Four, our SEC championship, our first round win that no one thinks we're going to get.

I like playing with a chip on our shoulder, but our expectation is to win. Every time we roll the ball on the court, when we play the kind of basketball that we're capable of playing with this program, then we should be competitive and end games to win them.

Yeah, the long-term goal is to be in a lot of these games in March, and hopefully in April soon, and hopefully people are starting to turn -- we're starting to turn heads. I'm not worried about that. I'm worried about tomorrow, and hopefully after tomorrow we'll play the next day and the next day and right now that's where my mind is.

**Q. You talked a lot about Jordyn's toughness throughout her career and this season. Is there no better person to reach this milestone than her maybe?**

SHEA RALPH: I'm a little biased, and I haven't been here. That might be a better question for Dr. Lee since she's been here a little longer than me. But yes, I believe that the moment was right for her, and I have a personal kind of attachment to her story, understanding how hard it is to come back from what she's done and the injuries that she's sustained and to play the way that she plays lets you know how much she loves the game of basketball. It's hard to not root for a kid like that, right?

She does everything she's supposed to do. You don't even see the things behind the scenes. You see her on the basketball court. You have no idea what it takes for her to be out there every day. I have to make her not practice so that she can be ready for us to play games.

This kid loves to play. She's soaking up every second, and any time you can witness somebody like that do something special, that's a piece of history I want to be part of.

**Q. Shea, this was Vanderbilt's first SEC Tournament game win in six years. What does it mean to you guys to get that win and especially to get it in front of a home Nashville crowd?**

SHEA RALPH: We were really, really excited to play in Nashville. I didn't realize it was the first one in six years, but I like breaking streaks in a good way, so we came in here not talking about any of that. You guys have some really fun facts that I had no idea existed, but we knew we were capable of coming in here and winning. I feel like that every time we go out and play. We have made mistakes that have hurt us down the stretch, but for the most part this year when we're full go, fully healthy, we've been in most of our games. So we knew.

We're really happy with our draw. We're really disappointed coming off of Alabama, but going into March it's a whole other level of basketball, and you know when you lose, you go home. When you lose, you go home. Being able to win a game and know that we live to see tomorrow is special, and that's exactly where our mindset was today.

**Q. Playing Florida, who you just beat last week, is there a challenge in facing the same team twice in that short of a time span and knowing what happened last time?**

SHEA RALPH: Yeah, I think if you look at it that way it can be. Again, I think it's all in perspective. I actually am really happy with that because we just prepared for them. We don't have a lot of time. We have a quick turnaround right now. We're able to enjoy. Our players know what the game plan is. Literally we just played them it feels like ten minutes ago. We'll just be able to focus on ourselves.

In March really any game, but in March especially it's going to be making plays down the stretch, right? We'll prepare like we do for every game, but it's going to be about us.

**Q. Got another fun fact for you.**

SHEA RALPH: Let's hear it.

**Q. Sacha Washington has three straight double-doubles. It seemed like she was a presence early in the game when you all made that run. How have you seen her improve throughout the season?**

SHEA RALPH: Leaps and bounds. She had 23-13 in our

last game, and it was a loss, and she was in consolable in the locker room. Inconsolable. One of my assistants went up to her and said, hey, listen, it's huge growth right now. I didn't think you would have 23 points on the season. So we're going somewhere.

It made her laugh. That kid is really hard on herself, but that's a great sign. She always wants to do more to help us win. She always thinks that there's more that she can do to help us win, and that's driven her improvement this year. You're going to see so a lot from her. You're going to see her get a lot better really quickly because she loves to play, and she wants to get better, and she wants to help her team win.

**Q. I saw that you kind of shared a hug with Coach Blair after the final buzzer. What do you think of just his career? He has done a lot there.**

SHEA RALPH: He really has. That's such a tough question. It's hard to put such a special career and a special man in words, and I know because I've benefitted from what he has done as a player and as a coach. What we're experiencing right now is because of coaches and people like Gary Blair. He has laid the foundation for the growth of this game. For me to be able to be where I'm at and have the resources that I do and play in a tournament like this at Bridgestone Arena and for my players to be in the best conference in women's basketball, that's Gary Blair. He has been doing it for a long time. There's a lot of sacrifice there.

I have so much respect for him. I hope he gets some rest and relaxation. He said he doesn't know what he is going to do. That's what he told me. I might invite him to a practice or two and see if we can get him to hang around for a little bit longer.

**Q. What was it like at the end of the game with Coach Blair and his final game and some of the reactions you had at the end?**

SHEA RALPH: He is such a great guy, and I just thought about today even, you know, in my coaching career and as a player I remember him. So this is his last game potentially, and I'm on the other bench as the head coach? I remember as an assistant that no one knew, I sat in the stands at a random high school when I was recruiting, and Gary Blair talked to me for 45 minutes. I don't think anybody in the gym knew who I was. He was talking to me about coaching and staying in and contributing to the game. He is so happy that I'm in coaching. He didn't have to do that, and he probably doesn't remember it, but that's the kind of person that he is, and I remembered that moment, and then I wanted this to be a really special

tournament for him, but also wanted to win. Hopefully he felt both.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. That's all.

SHEA RALPH: Bye, guys. See you tomorrow.

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