

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 5, 2022

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Dawn Staley

Aliyah Boston

Laeticia Amihere

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 61, Ole Miss 51

Q. Aliyah, any more sore after today's game than you've been in a while? It just really seemed like a dogfight out there today.

ALIYAH BOSTON: Yeah, it was physical, but no, I'm all right.

Q. Being able to just limit Shakira the way you guys have been able to in three games this year, just talk about the defensive performance that you guys have had against her, not only yourself but also V and Kamilla and even LA when she gets her opportunity, as well?

ALIYAH BOSTON: Yeah, we just wanted to make it difficult for her the entire night, make sure she felt us every time we touched the ball, so that's what we did over the course of the games.

Q. Just in the fourth quarter what goes into kind of maintaining the leads that you guys build up, especially in the third when you came in, 23 points, I think. What goes into that and what are some things you're hoping to learn from it?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: I think the key word that Coach harps to us is discipline, that we've got to be disciplined. It's tournament time so we're going to get the best from our opponents, so we've got to be aware when crunch time comes they're going to do anything they can do to get back in the game. So it comes down to discipline and we'll make sure that we're a better team coming forward.

Q. What was the key to that fourth quarter? What was Ole Miss doing that held you scoreless from the field and also forcing eight turnovers?

ALIYAH BOSTON: I think a lot of it is just about us just making sure that we are just handling the pressure and doing what we know that we need to do, and so we're just going to work on improving that.

Q. What is this grind like? I know you've gone through this with the SEC tournament, but being able to get to this point and then obviously playing in tomorrow's game, how do you mentally and physically stay prepared?

ALIYAH BOSTON: I think it's just knowing what you want. We came into this tournament knowing that we want to make it to Sunday and win the entire tournament, and so just knowing that that's on the front of our mind and just staying focused.

Q. Aliyah, how good does it feel to be back in that game, coming here with that goal to now know that you're in tomorrow's game with a chance to add another piece to this puzzle?

ALIYAH BOSTON: Yeah, it's really exciting. This was one of our goals that we set at the beginning of the year, and so now it's here.

Q. Laeticia, with the team getting off to a slow start today, did the team have the mindset that you really needed to get something going as soon as you got in there?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: Yeah, not necessarily on the offensive end but just making an impact on the defensive end as well. Making an impact, communicating, just doing the little things I can do to help my team win.

Q. Coach, I want to know what it is about Coach O and her team that will always give you a run for your money.

DAWN STALEY: I mean, they're disciplined. I mean, they're relentless. They don't take plays off, no matter what the score is. They're committed. They're committed to running their sets. They're committed to defending. They're committed to making you feel uncomfortable, and they do it for 40 minutes.

Q. Dawn, I wanted to ask about the 22 turnovers. I know looking at the stat sheet that's something you're really going to focus on. Is it burpees? What is it you guys are going to do between now and the rest of the tournament to get that bug back off. Because we've seen in the past it's gotten better and then it's coming back. What goes into that with turnovers right now?

DAWN STALEY: You said burpees? We've got less than 24 hours to get ready for an SEC championship game. I mean, we watch film. We just have to point it out. We've got to look at it, and I mean, I don't -- it's a decision. Our turnovers were bad decisions. We have to be better as a collective group. I've got to be better with making sure we've got the right lineup out there, and we just lost the momentum.

When you're playing a caliber game like we're playing, it's hard. I mean, the swing of the momentum is hard to get back once you've had it, and that's actually what happened to us.

Q. Going off of that, what did you see change between the third and fourth quarters that saw you go from 23 to just 10 by the final?

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, we got hesitant. They got more aggressive and we just got more cautious, and we just -- the court closed down on us, and we just did not make good decisions out there on the floor. We tried to get different combinations in there, but once they had the momentum -- you've got to ride it out. And I thought we hit some free throws in the fourth quarter because that's all we got. We didn't get a field goal. I don't think we got the ball to the right people to make the right decisions, and we've got to be better with that.

Q. The locker room after today's game, did it feel like it normally feels after a win, or was there just a tinge of some disappointment in there, as well?

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, obviously we don't like to play bad basketball. Bad basketball puts you in a bad mood. We've got to figure it out, and we're going to figure it out. I know we're not going to play this bad tomorrow. We're going to figure out a combination that will get us to play the kind of basketball we need to play to secure another SEC Tournament championship.

Q. I think on the outside some people just assume, all right, South Carolina, they get to this point every year. Being able to have that type of quarter that you guys had today, how much can that be added motivation and maybe just a little bit of a wake-up call for the players to be able to give them that extra edge as they go into tomorrow's game?

DAWN STALEY: I mean, the core group of our players have been here. They've experienced it. They'll be ready. It's just the ones that haven't been here before that really don't understand how hard it is because they've -- it's like trust babies. They're born into money. Some of our youngsters were born into what we've been able to do over the past couple of years in our league.

When you haven't really -- when you don't know, you just kind of assume and just think that, oh, this is how it is. You talk to Aliyah, you talk to LA, you talk to some of the players that have been here, this is their third year being here, and they don't know any different than playing in a championship game. They're going to pull everybody else. They're going to pull the weight of everybody that really doesn't understand what it is to win an SEC Tournament championship.

I almost equate it with competing for a National Championship. That's the seriousness of wanting to win an SEC Tournament championship.

Q. Dawn, putting together kind of the answers from two of the earlier questions, you said that the turnovers were bad decisions and that you guys got hesitant. I'm curious how interlocked those two things are. You guys are such a competitive, aggressive team. Is it easier to make bad decisions when you're sort of uncharacteristically on your heels?

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, when it rains, it pours. It's like, you want to think you have enough poise to stop the bleeding, but you get a little tighter, you don't want to make a mistake and you end up making big mistakes.

I thought I put a lineup in that probably shouldn't have been in in the fourth quarter, just trying to get some people some experience playing at this level, but I thought I had enough experience on the floor. But our experienced were the ones that started the downfall of this, but they'll bounce back. They'll bounce back. There's no doubt about them bouncing back and playing better basketball.

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