

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 6, 2022
Nashville, Tennessee, USA
Bridgestone Arena

Kentucky Wildcats

Kyra Elzy

Dre'una Edwards

Rhyne Howard

Postgame Press Conference



Kentucky 64, South Carolina 62

Q. You guys had a pretty long hug after the game and you were saying things to one another. I was curious what you were saying to each other in that moment?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: We looked at each other and we both said, I love you, man. Rhyne kept saying thank you, and I said, man, this one was for you. I had to get you one before you left, man, I had to.

Q. Rhyne, Kyra said last night that you started the season under a lot of pressure and she had a conversation with you about having fun and enjoying the rest of the season. How did that help you change your mindset and really enjoy this and end up here?

RHYNE HOWARD: I just had to realize I can't control what was happening. There was nothing that could be done on my end, so I just had to settle in and confide in my teammates and have fun with them and just go all out for them.

Q. You guys were down 15 late in the third. What changed in that fourth quarter? You particularly had 12 points, knocked down three threes including the game winner. What happened in that fourth quarter? And on that final shot, what did you see in knocking down the ball?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: I just kept telling my team it ain't over, it ain't over. We kept propping each other up and they kept propping me up and they kept telling me, can't nobody guard you, go out there and score. And I had to do

it for my team.

Q. Obviously Treasure started with the ball there on that last session. Was that kind of your game plan or did it end up in your hands? What was the plan?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: It was whoever was open going to shoot it, and they got me the ball and I was open, and I had to let it fly.

Q. As a follow-up to that, how confident were you in that shot once you took it that it was going to go in?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: I was very confident. I can shoot. I knew I was going to hit the shot. I just had to let it fly, like I said.

Q. Rhyne, obviously I think all eyes were on you coming out of that time-out with 11 seconds to go. Were you surprised at all that South Carolina decided not to foul and allowed you guys to have your possession, run your inbound, get the ball in, and obviously we saw what happened?

RHYNE HOWARD: We prepared for both. We said if they foul, get the shot up so it's a shooting foul. If they don't, whoever is open, take it, like Dre said, and Dre happened to be open, and we all knew it was going up.

Q. Rhyne, I was just curious when Dre takes that shot, what did you see and what did you feel?

RHYNE HOWARD: You know in the movies when they take the game winner and everyone is like -- that was me. I was like -- and it went in, I don't even know what I saw. Everybody was just jumping around. They didn't even -- I don't know why they didn't throw the ball in because we were not set, but it was one of those moments, like picture perfect.

Q. You guys did have to regroup pretty quickly, play defense for about four seconds. Everyone was probably freaking out?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: I was.



Q. How long after the buzzer did it register that you had won the championship?

RHYNE HOWARD: Immediately. It registered as soon as she hit that shot because we knew they didn't have any time-outs. We knew people were up there to slow them down if they did throw the ball in, but immediately when Dre hit the shot, we knew it was game. We knew we had just won.

Q. No one knows the start of the season better than you two, so what does it mean to end the season like this for Kyra?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: It means a lot. We had bumped heads a little bit, we had some up-and-downs for sure. Stay poised do, what I gotta do, and my team held it down and they was fighting all the way. So I knew when I got back, I had to fight, too, and that's what we all did and that's what we did and we the got W.

RHYNE HOWARD: We all bumped heads. I bumped heads a little bit too. But at the end of the, she had our backs more than anyone else, so we knew we had to step up for her and for ourselves.

Q. Rhyne, what has changed over the past 10 games for Kentucky on your current winning streak and what does it mean to do something for the first time in 40 years for Kentucky?

RHYNE HOWARD: We started having fun. That's pretty much it. When things were getting tough, we wasn't having fun. Basically we acted like we didn't want to be there, and that's how it looked, and that's how it appeared to our fans.

After we stopped -- we had a team meeting, we were like, all right, y'all, this is dead, we cannot end like this, especially with it being a lot of us being seniors and just meaning a lot to ourselves and to Kentucky. We knew we had to get it together and thug it out.

Q. Rhyne, you spoke about the importance of Kentucky there. You guys had John Calipari, President Capilouto, Mitch Barnhart, and of course your families were there. What did it mean to have all those people supporting you after all you've been through this season?

RHYNE HOWARD: One thing, they're never going to walk away from you. They're always going to support you whatever the case may be, and that is exactly what they did today. Dr. Capilouto being here is just extra motivation for us. They don't come to a lot of our tournaments and

stuff, so we knew we had to thug it out and pull it out and get the win.

Q. Kyra, you've talked about the meeting and they talked about it and they said they had fun, but in that meeting they said it's do or die, you have to win to get to the tournament, to get to where you want to be. That sense of urgency can make teams play tight, and for you guys to maybe have fun, I'm curious how that balance works.

KYRA ELZY: Well, you know, we're competitors, and basketball is pressure filled. We've done it our whole life.

I knew we had been put in situations when our back was against the wall, and we had enough to step up. We're a talented team. I was confident in them. I have an amazing coaching staff that just battled and worked nonstop, a support staff that encouraged us nonstop.

I want to give a shout out to Mr. Barnhart, our athletic director. I received a call or a text message to say, hang in there, I believe in you, you are our coach, and we knew we just had to step up, and we did.

Q. You've become the first team to knock off the 1, 2 and 3 seed in this tournament and to win this title for the first time in 40 years. I know you haven't had a chance to let that sink in, but you've been around this tournament enough; can you put that into perspective yet?

KYRA ELZY: I cannot. It has not sunk in. However, coming out of the time-out, like Rhyne said, we had prepared for both, if they would foul us or if we're going to run our side out of bounds. But I told Dre, if they go with Rhyne and you are open, take the shot, rhythm shots. Don't make any decision, a rhythm shot. I'm confident in that shot. She works on it. When the shot went up, I knew it was good. It looked good. I started running down the sidelines. I knew it was good.

But you know, our team has been in tough situations all year long, and it's good to see it pay off for the win for the Cats.

Q. Your team didn't look intimidated from the jump. How did you see that confidence build through the end of the season, even in this tournament?

KYRA ELZY: You know, we said in pregame -- well first of all, hats off to Coach Staley and what she has done for South Carolina for women's basketball. I mean, the season that they have had, and they still have a lot of basketball left to play. They're an amazing team.

You know, one thing we talked about in the locker room, we had played them twice and we hadn't backed down. It hadn't turned out in our favor, but we weren't going to back down today, either. We knew we had to hustle, we knew we had to rebound and push in transition offense, and our players followed the game plan, and I'm just proud of the tenacity of this team.

Q. Kyra, a little insight, would you mind kind of painting the picture for us inside that team huddle during the time-out with 11 seconds to go. What were you seeing on the ladies' faces? What were you feeling from them? What were you feeling yourself? Could you give us a little insight there?

KYRA ELZY: You know, we were confident. Having Coach Gail Goestenkors on the staff, one thing she challenged me with at the beginning of the season is every water break, let's have a late-game situation, a side out of bounds or a baseline out of bounds. So we probably have done 100 of those during the season.

Our players were very composed and confident because we had went over it a thousand times, so we knew exactly what we were looking for, and thank God the shot went in.

Q. What specifically has the team been better on on the court during this 10-game winning streak?

KYRA ELZY: What we've done is we have -- we're selling out defensively. I told them no matter what happens, defense travels, rebounds travel, the heart to compete travels. We will figure out something on the offensive end, but just sold out defensively.

Q. Dre Edwards has really taken off this season offensively and had a really dominant performance this tournament. What did it mean to see her get that shot and what were you thinking when she let it loose?

KYRA ELZY: Rhythm shots. I was confident in it, and it looked good when it left her hands. But you know, I am so proud of Dre. We did hit heads early on, but she came back a better person, a better player, and committed to what we needed to get done in Kentucky women's basketball, and she has helped this program move forward.

Q. Now you have your ticket punched, you don't have to worry for the next week --

KYRA ELZY: Nope, we are not on the bubble. We have our ticket punched. We are going.

Q. How much does that help you in how you spend

this next week? Is it recovery? Do you hone things? What's the plan now that you have this streak going?

KYRA ELZY: Yes, we do have to have some recovery, rest, but we always do that coming off the SEC tournament, try to get people healthy.

Then we go back to work. Our job is we're going to celebrate this SEC championship, but our job is not yet done. We still have work to do. We look forward to playing in the NCAA Tournament and making a run.

Q. You're no stranger to cutting down nets as a player, but what does it mean to do it as a coach? What was that moment like for you?

KYRA ELZY: It really has not sunk in, but it is truly an honor to be the head coach at Kentucky.

Now I can say I've won it as a student-athlete, I've won it as an assistant coach, and now winning it as a head coach, and to be your first, this will be a memory that I will never forget.

Q. Four games in four days; did you have a sense for how the players' bodies were feeling coming into today?

KYRA ELZY: I'm sure they were sore, but what I kept pumping in their heads, we have enough. We've played four games in eight days twice this year. We've played with six people. We have enough, and it's going to be mentally taxing, but that's why you practice. That's why you've been to the weight training room, the extra suicides, all for this moment, and they're not worried about feeling sore right now.

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