

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 2, 2023

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Auburn Tigers

Coach Johnnie Harris

Sydney Shaw

Postgame Press Conference



As far as my future, I know my Coach has a plan for this team and a plan for me as well. I put my trust in my Coach and I know we are going to make it a lot further next year and the years to come.

Q. Can you speak to this season? How was it? Where do you feel like you can grow more and for the team as well?

SYDNEY SHAW: Throughout the whole season I thought the recurring problem would be my defense. I got with my Coach about it. Of course I can always keep growing on defense and just finding open shots. From high school you're used to like being open is wide open, but in the SEC being open you got one second to get that shot off.

So I think that has been an adjustment that I can keep growing at. And just being more confident. One shot doesn't define my whole game, and I think today I tried to really capitalize on that and keep playing and keep playing hard.

Q. What felt right today that let you go off?

SYDNEY SHAW: If I'm being honest, I just didn't want to go home.

Q. It's difficult to play somebody in a short period of time. You had a very physical game about a week ago.

What about the mental preparation? Coach, I know you spoke to the point about effort, but it had to be difficult to pair again when you had a very physical game about a week ago.

COACH HARRIS: Yeah, we did. I thought -- you know, we played them and then we played Vanderbilt, who runs a similar match-up zone, so I thought we were really prepared offensively to play this team.

We ran similar plays against both of them, maybe screening angles, maybe a couple of tweaks against both, so for the last couple of weeks we have been going against their defense.

Georgia 63, Auburn 47

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Coach Harris and Sydney Shaw. We will start off with an opening from Coach Harris, and then we will take questions for Sydney.

Coach?

COACH HARRIS: I thought we came out and we scored 10 points in the first quarter. So we had a hard time getting good, open looks, or finding a person that was open. Then we held them to 12 points. We just didn't capitalize on it. First quarter, third quarter, third quarter they were 1 for 12, but we didn't capitalize as well.

We pretty much followed our defensive game plan. We just weren't able to score against their zone. I was really disappointed in our effort to go to the offensive rebound.

I felt that we were missing shots, but we weren't going to rebound. They did a really good job on the boards for us. I did think Syd came to play today. She knocked down some shots, guarded pretty well until she got in foul trouble, and then we were a little soft.

I thought this kid came and battled and gave us everything she had.

Q. This being your freshman season, your first SEC Tournament, can you talk about how this has gone and what you see the future of this team and the future for yourself?

SYDNEY SHAW: I know it's only my freshman year, but I imagined us going further than this. I didn't imagine us laying down like we did at the end.



And we have been guarding similar.

I really felt like, you know, we had a chance in here. I think other than that second quarter, we were in every other quarter. The second quarter I thought we got in foul trouble. I think we came out and fouled a lot, early, maybe like six fouls before we even drew one, so we were playing past it.

And we were fouling. I think other than that second quarter and be not being able to really score -- we got open shots, we just didn't hit 'em. I think they took the paint away, which is what we do best.

We relied too much on our 3-point shots, maybe not working the ball enough and relied on our 3-point shot, and that's really not our game. Other than that second quarter I thought we battled them. But we just have to -- we have to be better.

Q. Sydney, this is a young team. Can you talk about who leads this team? Aicha was so great tonight. I'm not sure if you have words about her?

SYDNEY SHAW: I think everybody leads in different ways. In the game -- the trajectory of the game changes -- is that the right word? The trajectory of the game changes when she is locked in. You can tell, come on guys, we want it. When she wants it, everybody wants it.

Being a freshman I'm trying my best to step into the role as a leader, but I know it comes with time and experience. We look up to Honesty as well. When their energy is good, all energy is good. When the energy is bad, it shows.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Sydney. Questions for Coach.

Q. You touched on Georgia's defense, particularly the zone. Can you talk about it? It seems tough to navigate.

COACH HARRIS: Yeah, yeah, it is. They're long. They're really active in it. They make it difficult for you to get the ball on the inside, and we -- I felt like when we were there, we were able to get the ball in the heart and we played a lot of high-low. They took that away tonight. Yeah, it's tough to play against. It's a match-up zone, and they make it really difficult for you to get where you need to be when you need to be there.

They take different things away. They have different schemes where they take different things away. I really don't have a true point guard so that really showed tonight.

Q. Can you speak to your own defense? Seemed like moments in that second half where really the tenacity was cranked up, trapping, almost full-court press in some moments. Where was the energy from that?

COACH HARRIS: Yeah, it was. We've been working on that. We're usually up the line. We're pressuring the ball, we're up the line, we're fronting the low post. Today, actually this week, we put in a couple of traps where we trapped on the side, we trapped that high ball screen.

We started trapping the high ball screen at halftime because they were turning the corner and drawing and kicking.

So we wanted to stop that, which we did. But, I mean, she was really good at getting out of it and finding the open person.

In the second half it was more of the -- it was more of their post players. In the first half she was finding 3-point shooters, outside shooters.

Q. I was hoping you could reflect on this year. I know it's a young team. Where do you feel like y'all have grown? Where do you have more to work on in the off-season? Is there anything you want to work on?

COACH HARRIS: Yeah, definitely. I want to work on being tougher. I feel like overall this season we were probably where we was projected, not where we wanted to be, not where we felt like we could have been.

We started the SEC season with Honesty missing three games, then AC missed. So you have two of your top-two scorers missing six games. Then you have Romi who was in the starting lineup missing three games, and those are our veterans.

We had key players miss games, but what it did was help our younger players to grow up. They had to grow up fast. It's hard for young kids in the SEC when you don't have an Honesty who would usually calm them down and keep everybody -- or you don't have an AC who they know they can go to to get a bucket or get a stop or she is in the huddle trying to get them riled up. But I did feel like they grew up a little bit.

I do want to work on being tougher. We're going to definitely work on shooting a lot in the off-season. Getting tougher. We will get some help in here. We have some players coming in that we felt like will help us get over the hump. We will be able to take them overseas in August and hopefully that will prepare us for next year. We plan on coming in here next year being a different ball club.

Q. Personally curious about Akinbolawa. I covered her career before. She didn't play much this year. I know she came late. Where do you see her growing and developing as a player?

COACH HARRIS: Just her understanding is where she has to grow. I feel like she's tough. She is -- you know, sometimes she gets fed up because she hasn't played at this level. She played club ball last year but she didn't really play organized basketball. I really feel like she is strong. We didn't really get to see her skill set, but she is really learning.

Some of the language is different for her. You know, we say jump to the ball that means something totally different to her, so that was the biggest struggle for her, understanding the basketball language.

I really believe that -- she works extremely hard. She is -- it takes her about ten minutes to be sweaty. I mean, she's drippin'. Already I feel like with her work ethic and -- she's hungry, she wants to get better. She wants to learn. I feel like you will see a different kid next year.

I feel like she will get in there and work hard, coach "D". I feel like she is always asking for extra, she will work extra in the weight room, she will work extra on the court. She comes in and watches film, so her best is yet to come. I'm really excited about her future.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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