

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Dawn Staley

Postgame Press Conference



you won the fourth 31-19.

VICTARIA SAXTON: I think it was big. Our bigs came in and did their thing, so I think that was big for us.

Q. I can't remember what the total number ended up being, but I think I looked down sometime in the third quarter and you guys had 40 points in the paint. I know that's what you guys do on a night in, night out basis, but from an efficiency standpoint, how well do you think it was going in the paint today?

VICTARIA SAXTON: I think it was going really well. Like I said before, our teammates getting us the ball inside and knowing when to attack the basket or when to get it into the post, so I think it went really, really well.

Q. Arkansas was never out of the game with the capability of shooting the three. Was that a point of emphasis coming into this game, chasing them off the 3-point line?

VICTARIA SAXTON: Yes. We knew they were a 3-point-shooting team, so we knew we had to be able to take care of that.

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

Q. Coach, I want to ask about the sportsmanship of the game. There were so many times where things could have got chippy, out of hand, and I don't remember one time that an Arkansas player was on the ground and one of your players didn't go help them up. Talk about the character of your team.

COACH STALEY: We have special human beings, I've said it once and I'll say it again. They just want to win. They see the game as an opportunity to learn and grow. They look at it as life. Sometimes we fall down and other people pick us up.

But I think that's been the characteristic of this team. I mean, they've done it their entire. (Zoom froze.)

South Carolina 93, Arkansas 66

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the postgame press conference for South Carolina. I'm joined by head coach, Dawn Staley and student athlete, Victaria Saxton. We will begin with questions for Victaria.

Q. Obviously a huge game for you. What did you see from their defense that allowed you to put up a season-high with 19 points today?

VICTARIA SAXTON: I think we were able to have our bigs post up and our teammates were able to get us the ball, so I think that was helpful.

Q. After watching Chrissy Carr's performance yesterday, talk about being able to hold her to 2 points all game. How big that was for your victory today?

VICTARIA SAXTON: I know she has been shooting the ball really well late in the season so I knew I had to stay close on defense, and know how quick and how far I had to be so I can get there quick enough.

Q. You definitely had it going today. At what point in the game did you know that you were kinda in the zone?

VICTARIA SAXTON: I don't think there was a point. I just do my job every game and do what I'm here to do and play my role.

COACH STALEY: You didn't hear her mom?

VICTARIA SAXTON: Yeah, mom was yelling.

Q. How important was that fourth quarter to really close it out? I know the third quarter was tight and



The ultimate teammate. She is going to make a great coach in the near future if she doesn't take a professional athlete route. But she wants to be a coach, and she's going to be a heck of a coach.

We always say you get everything back that you did to your coaches when you become a coach. If she gets everything she gave to us, she is going to have a smooth career, like, really smooth, unchallenged as far as, you know, young people can challenge you in a certain way. I hope that is the case for her.

Q. Dawn, following up on her having that sort of offensive performance, how gratifying is that? Everybody knows about the Aliyahs and the Zias, but how gratifying is that for you to have her offensively?

COACH STALEY: You want great performances from your players, but there are some players that are just a little bit special because of who they are and because of what they give and because of what they sacrifice. V is one of those players where you want her to succeed, no matter what. I've probably limited her minutes this year just because Kamilla has been playing so well.

Doesn't say a word. Doesn't come to my office and say why, you know, why? She doesn't. She just does her part. And I'm happy in moments like this because basketball has a way of rewarding players like that and on the biggest stage.

Q. You knew Arkansas was going to come into this one, they have a lot to play for. Coach Neighbors said it yesterday, that they knew they were fighting for their postseason life. They came out a lot sharper than they did down the road. Do you think that's a tournament-worthy team?

COACH STALEY: Without a doubt. They're in. The schedule that they played, they finished strong in our league. They're in. They play in the SEC, and with that type of record and that nonconference schedule, I would be shocked. I have been shocked before, but I think they're in.

Q. Coach, congrats on the win, first and foremost. My question is you guys had the first game with the rest of the day ahead. How do you plan on relaxing for the rest of the day or watching your next opponent that's about to play? What are your plans?

COACH STALEY: Relaxing is something that's for next week. We're going to watch this next game to see what opponent we will face tomorrow, Texas A&M and Ole Miss, and then we go back and eat and meet tonight as a team

and put a game plan together that hopefully can allow us to advance to the finals.

Q. Talk about playing in Greenville and what it means to the team to be able to play in front of your fans and have a good showing for them?

COACH STALEY: Greenville is a great city. Like it's beautiful. It's a location in which it's fan friendly. There are a lot of restaurants. The arena is loud when there are a lot of people in there.

I truly hope that we give the fans and our fans their money's worth. They budget for this. They budget. They want to know when our schedule is. They knew our SEC Tournament was going to be here in Greenville so they go and buy tickets. They sacrifice other things for them to come and enjoy the SEC Tournament.

For our families, they want us to win, so I hope we continue to do that and allow them a little bit of pride in knowing that their money was spent well.

Q. Talk about what Arkansas did well tonight. Where did they work with your system to disrupt?

COACH STALEY: I mean, they just kept coming at 'em. They're never out of the game because of their ability to shoot the 3, and they actually got pretty much their average.

They took 34 shots to get them, but that's what they do. They're going to do that. I thought they put us back on our heels and drove it at us downhill. When we overhelped they kicked it out and banged 3s. I thought they did a good job of getting to the free throw line, and they have some great pieces that are really starting to play extremely well together.

Mike is going to spread you out. His 3s are layups and he has a winning formula to doing it that way.

Q. Dawn, Brea hit a couple of three's early. How crucial is that to your game, especially in a pressurized situation?

COACH STALEY: Brea is special. She is cut probably from the same cloth as Victaria in that she is one of our two unsung heroes that's low maintenance and high performing. Never gives us anything. Like, never. Like, nothing! Nothing as far as anything off the floor. She is never unhappy with the way things are going. She communicates extremely well.

For her, we don't have to worry about her. There is

comfort in knowing that there is nothing -- there is nothing that will interfere with the focus that's needed for us to continue to advance and be successful, and she gives us that.

Q. Dawn, I know some of it came late, but 43 points from the bench, how much easier is that for you guys when the bench and the reserves are flowing like that?

COACH STALEY: It was great. I trust them. Obviously the game got -- I think they cut it to like 14 or maybe 12, and then probably most coaches would look back down the line and try to get some starters back in the game.

But I wanted our bench to play it out. Then they got it up. They got it up to 19 and 20, 20 points.

Coming into a tournament setting like this, it's great for their confidence. It's great for us to trust them to be able to, you know, to not look down that bench, and I didn't look down. I just tried to coach 'em up to a place where they could feel confident and get things going, because that unit plays together a lot in practice, and I wanted them to actually play well together.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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