

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

LSU Lady Tigers

Coach Kim Mulkey

Flau'jae Johnson

Alexis Morris

Postgame Press Conference



mistakes on defense. But it was my best shooting performance. I wouldn't day my best game. But I was feeling it tonight, I ain't gonna lie. I was flying tonight. Ate those on up.

Q. Congratulations on the win you guys, and welcome to Greenville. For you two, for you to be the senior and you to be SEC Freshman of the Year, I think everybody got that memo today. Talk about the connection that you two have just for you to be the leader for her and for you to look up to her.

LSU 83, Georgia 66

THE MODERATOR: We are here with Coach Kim Mulkey, Alexis Morris, and Flau'jae Johnson.

Go ahead and take questions for the student athletes.

Q. For either of y'all, you had a season-high in 3-pointers tonight. What was clicking on those outside shots for y'all tonight?

ALEXIS MORRIS: Sharing the ball, make sure we kept our offense moving, and just finding one another. We trusted in each other, we trusted in our shot, and we came out confident tonight.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: I think that's it, making the extra pass, passing up a good shot for a great one. I mean, we all been in the gym workin', so it just showed when the lights turned on.

Q. Going off that, Alexis, you got three right away. Was that -- did you feel like coming in that you were in that kind of groove immediately?

ALEXIS MORRIS: This is my last year. It's do or die for me. I just came out just -- I just took what the defense gave me and fortunately enough I was able to hit them tonight.

Q. Flau'jae, would you say this is your best game in the purple and gold so far?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Nah, because I made a lot of

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: She just got this energy, you know what I'm saying, that you want to follow. Every rep, she is going to go 100%. And when I see that, I'm like, okay, now this what it take. I remember in the summer used to wake up super early, just go ball handling and stuff. I used to see how long she would be ball handling, how hard she be going. I was like, Oh, my God. I got a long way to go, you feel me? But just seein' that and how hard she go, that just inspires me to go that hard. So when you really puttin' in the work like it's really gonna show, you feel me? And it just did tonight.

ALEXIS MORRIS: Flau'jae is hungry and a raw talent, and I think you all can see that. She is not your typical freshman. She has been starting for us all year and she is special.

As me being a leader I have to lead by example, and as she said, I have to go hard in practice and practice my reps. My body language, sometimes when I'm behaving a certain way and I see Flau'jae I see she is looking up to me, so I've got to be a positive role models for everybody.

Q. What did you think about that delay? It's supposed to be an indoor sport. Weather is not supposed to bother us.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Alexis was like, stay locked in, you know what I'm saying? Because we in the locker room joking and was like, no, lock in. Lay down. Get off your feet. That was crazy though.

ALEXIS MORRIS: I don't know. I think it was a fluke. I



think y'all was trying to throw us out of our rhythm or something. I don't know what it was. I've never experienced anything like that in my life.

Not in AAU, high school, elementary, ever. It was just -- I don't know.

Q. For both of you, postseason brings out emotions, things like that. Second half there was, you know, something I guess (indiscernible) I guess what was it like being on the court and handling that then being able to finish the rest of the game despite some of the chippiness that might have been going on?

ALEXIS MORRIS: Oh, no distractions. Nothing can distract us from what we need to get accomplished. And two, when people are talking to your Coach, our leader, our captain, we don't take that very nicely.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: We don't play like that.

ALEXIS MORRIS: You have to respect your coaches and your elders. People crossed the line tonight and we took that personally and we handled business. It turned us up a notch.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: I think for me it was just like, stay focused, stay locked in, you know what I'm sayin'? She a big personality, but like she said, we don't take no disrespect for our coach. Not for the head hanzo. I just said, let's take that and put it into the game. And we did that. Look at the score.

Q. Alexis, Coach talked about how you had broken records but not won a game in the SEC Tournament. What did it take for you to get that win?

ALEXIS MORRIS: I believe this is my third SEC appearance. I didn't win at Texas A&M, I didn't play last year because I was injured, so this is special to me and meaningful, and I want to see that championship game. Like I want to get there.

We only have one game that's guaranteed, and that's the NCAA tournament. Everything else is on us. We just taking it game by game. We just -- we locked in.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Free to go.

Questions for Coach.

Q. Kim, to get the balance -- when you get that kind of scoring from several players like that that, what do you think that makes your team in terms of being hard to beat? Would you have figured, especially given the

way the first Georgia game went -- maybe you didn't want to, but you ended up being able to rest Angel but not a bad thing.

COACH MULKEY: To answer the first part of your question, I think any coach will tell you when you can have four or five in double figures you're going to win a lot of basketball games.

I think the second part of your question was how close it was. We went into overtime at our place. We missed 17 free throws in that game; we had 18 turnovers. We had 16 turnovers tonight but we only had 6 at halftime. We hit shots. The perimeter hit shots.

I would have to go back and look at a film and ask why we didn't get more post touches, but your two starting post players scored double figures. They battled in there. I thought Kateri Poole was the hero tonight. I thought her minutes on the defensive end of the floor were solid. She ended up with 5 assists and 5 turnovers, but she penetrated, found open shots, plays, and found open players, and consequently they got easier, wide-open looks.

I thought we attacked the zone the same way. I can't tell you we put in -- maybe some quick hitters we put in. The press, they went to the press and made us look bad there in the fourth quarter, and they were trapping.

I would normally not call a timeout with seven tenths of a second, but I wasn't going to let that kid have another turnover. Most people don't trap when the game is over, but she did, and I chose to call the timeout right there. I know people are going, why are you doing that? Well, I'm not going to let you have a turnover right there.

Q. Coach, what did you see from Flau'jae tonight?

COACH MULKEY: I saw a relaxed kid. I saw a confident player. Her first few shots, when they went in, you just saw a kid go back to relaxing a little bit. Flau'jae is an entertainer. She is an entertainer both in her music and she is an entertainer on that floor, and she is a happy kid.

Maybe the last month, couple, two three weeks in February, she didn't play happy. She was mad at herself about this or mad at somebody about that. Just relax. You're Freshman of the Year in this league. I told her that before she got the award. I think maybe she is just relaxed now and hit those shots and became confident.

But she rebounded for us. She got a lot of rebounds for us down on the other end. She is a good player.

Q. Kim, Angel sitting out most of the fourth quarter, she seemed rather emotional, like her emotions were running high. Was that a decision by you to say you just need to calm down?

COACH MULKEY: No. She got popped in the eye and she lost part of her eyelash and her eye was extremely irritated and red. I don't know if that affected her. Then she picked up the fouls and got in foul trouble.

So I just think she just couldn't get in a groove. But that happens. I think she got her own misses a lot and got her shot blocked and then would get fouled. I think the one thing she is so good at that you didn't see much of tonight is going to get other people's misses. But when you shoot like we did, there is not many to go get. I watched her some just stand instead of flying in there.

Now, a zone can create that, somewhat, because it's crowded in there. Angel Reese is a beast.

Q. Could you speak a little bit to what Georgia did well tonight? I know that y'all won handily, but what do you think they did nicely?

COACH MULKEY: Never been asked that before. First of all, I love Katie. I think she brought all those young ladies with her from Central Florida, and it hit me when I looked at the scouting report, they've been together a long time. That's why they're so darn good in their matchup.

I thought they create a lot of turnovers. You don't think of a zone defense -- and she won't call it a zone; I do call it a zone -- it's the matchup. They create a lot of turnovers. You think you're going to get the ball to a post or perimeter player there at the foul line area and they kinda just reach and knock it away.

I think their turnovers are legit. I think the ones they create are really, really active. They're very active. I thought they played very physical tonight. They rebound hard for their size. You know, they're not 6'5", 6'7", anything like that, but they rebound extremely hard.

Q. Kim, what was that rain delay that we had like for you? What was the vibe like in the locker room? How do you handle that and coming back out?

COACH MULKEY: Well, let me be honest with you, the girls went into their locker room, and I walked in and told them three or four things immediately that we needed to do better, and then I walked out and went into the coaches locker room, texted with my son who is in Spring Training with the Cardinals.

He said oh, I thought you said you coached an indoor sport. That's going to be chapter 50 of my next book. All this coaching I've done I've never had a leaking roof like that, and guys, if we could have played, we would have.

I walked down there and Katie was trying to show me. I thought it was drip and we could wipe it. It was a pretty good flow of water coming.

Tiffany Daniels from the SEC office explained everything to us and we, on the fly, made decisions. Like, can we go to the locker room? Let us know what we can come back. She asked us if we wanted a 15-minute halftime or if we wanted to shorten it.

Katie wanted 15 and I was good with that. Wanted a 10-minute warm-up when we came back. Your fear is when you go in the locker room are you going to have the same intensity, are you going to be able to shoot the ball as good as you were on a roll doing it. Like a pitcher in baseball, you don't put 'em back on that mound usually if something like that happens because you're already warmed up and everything.

I thought we did okay. I thought we did okay. I thought they did okay. I thought both teams handled it as much as you could.

It was cute because they kept saying, oh, it's 40, 50, 60 mile an hour winds. I said, welcome to Louisiana. We're used to hurricanes. I'm not worrying about the wind. Tell me when it's going to stop drippin'.

They kept saying a flap -- did they explain it to y'all? A flap kept blowing and the rain, and next thing I know they put a tarp on it is what they said. You want to know what I said? Aren't y'all hosting a regional here? I believe I would get it fixed.

It's not a good look, is it?

Q. Seems like the vibes and the energy within the team are really, really good. Can you describe how they're working together on and off the court?

COACH MULKEY: Yeah. Who are you with? I've never seen you before.

Q. The Next.

COACH MULKEY: I've got some personalities. There are a lot of coaches that couldn't coach strong personality kids. I love it. I have a very matter-of-fact personality, and they respect all the coaches on this staff because they know we'll say things to them that mom and daddy would say.

But we have their back. And when it got heated out there I think you saw just a camaraderie. You know, you just don't mess with a teammate.

They have fun. They get on each other. They probably get on each other more than I get on them. But they know how to handle it. They're used to it. They're very talented.

Hopefully we can get on a roll here late and have every game from here on out where everybody is scoring the ball and sharing the ball and doing good things.

Q. Coach Mulkey, 2015 was the last time LSU advanced past the quarterfinals. Just year two for you you get your first win in the tournament. What does it mean to you? I know you guys aren't finished yet.

COACH MULKEY: Well, Chessa, we didn't win a game last year. We lost and Kentucky went on to win the whole thing, so that kinda softened the blow that they won it.

But as a competitor you have to have goals, and our goal was to win one game here. We've done that now. Can we win the next one? Can we get to the championship? You get a little bit greedy. So we did do that.

You have to make sure the LSU folks understand we have not arrived yet, guys, we've just won games. This program will have arrived when we are literally, literally winning championships. But, boy, are we on a fast track.

This was just another first for this staff at LSU to do this. For those players in the locker room, too.

Q. This goes off the points you were just making. Of course Alexis was just talking about how going into this tournament there is only one kind of guaranteed game, that being the NCAA. As someone who has been at that stage, made long runs, and now here in your second year at LSU, what are you communicating to this team about what's needed at that stage, at the NCAA?

COACH MULKEY: Well, we're not at the NCAA yet, and that's a hard one for me, but I will tell you my thoughts. I've said it from the time I started coaching at Baylor, I don't see a purpose in playing conference tournaments. I only see it if you're at the bottom of the conference to become a Cinderella to get in the tournament, or get maybe a better seed if you're on the bubble.

Tell me, if you're in the top two or three in the conference and you win the conference, pat 'em on the back. If you're not supposed to win it and you do but you're one of the top

two or three, do you see the seeding change? You don't.

The reason I'm so sensitive about that, think of conferences -- and listen to this -- really sensitive about it. I've never coached in what is considered a conference that only takes one team, but you have four or five of those. That team dominated the entire conference and is the best team in that conference.

Somebody can get on a roll in a conference tournament and beat them and win, and they get to go. But because they only take one team from that conference, is that the right thing to do? I don't believe so. I always value the length of a regular season over a two, three-day tournament. So it's not just my beliefs with my team, I've seen this for years.

I don't think that's right. Is it a money producer? I highly doubt it. Maybe on the men's side. So why do we play conference tournaments? Who at this tournament, Tennessee, are they going to up their seed? They might get a seed now and host at home, yes, but what value is it to South Carolina?

You worry about injuries. You want to win. Don't get me wrong, we all play to win; we're competitors. That's another trophy, that's another championship, but I think we've got it backwards on the value of a conference tournament versus a regular season. The men may feel that way, I don't know. But I've never wavered from that, even when I inherited a program at Baylor that had won nine ball games.

Boy, we were -- I don't know. I don't know that I'll ever change my mind on that, because I just value the length of a season over a conference tournament. I know my administrators are going to be like, Kim, hush, the SEC is going to be upset. It's not a knock -- everybody does it. Everybody has conference tournaments, but I feel for those teams that deserve to be in the NCAA tournament, and if they don't win their conference tournament, they don't get in.

Q. Kim, Alexis mentioned she thought a Georgia player crossed the line --

COACH MULKEY: I'm not going there.

Q. No comment?

COACH MULKEY: No. It's the heat of the moment. I could give you my version, she could give you her version, and somewhere in the middle somebody is going to believe whatever they want to believe. Heat of the moment. That's all I'll say.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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