

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 6, 2024
Greenville, South Carolina, USA
Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Kentucky Wildcats
Coach Kyra Elzy
Eniya Russell

Ajae Petty
Postgame Press Conference



Kentucky 64, Georgia 50

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the post-game press conference for Kentucky.

We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach Elzy, then take questions for the student-athletes, then questions for Coach.

KYRA ELZY: Yeah, I just want to say thank you for the city of Greenville for hosting us. It's been an amazing time thus far. I love their enthusiasm. This arena was amazing. I love to see the young kids in. It's good to be back at the SEC tournament. It just means more.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Eniya, you guys got out to a slow start in the first quarter. You came in, scored 10. What was the attitude, the mentality to get back in it and get a lead?

ENIYA RUSSELL: Well, Coach been preparing us for this moment. One down, we got to have somebody else to step up. Maddie Scherr, she's not with us for the tournament. She's here, but he's not playing.

Just having the mindset of stepping up, being ready to play on both ends of the floor, forgetting about the mistakes. It's basically a new season right here, so why not?

Q. Ajae, you looked like you was really trying to get on the boards today. I'm sure there was something the coach wanted you to do today. Was that your mindset going into the game?

AJAE PETTY: My mindset is to go in every game and be on the board. There's never a game going in and I'm like, I'm not going to go rebound, so...

Q. Petty, can you speak to making sure everybody on the floor is attacking, rebounding from the same perspective, involving everybody in the conversation? How do you motivate them ahead of a matchup like this?

AJAE PETTY: I think just continuing to do it. I'm more of a doer, less of a talker. If I'm doing it and my teammates are seeing me do it, I expect them to follow what I'm doing.

Like me and Emma King, we always talk, and she's always, like, saying that she's going to try to out-rebound me, even when Maddie was playing.

If I'm grabbing a lot of boards, that's motivating other people to try to get in there and grab some more.

Q. Coach, you talked a lot about consistency this year with this team because they've had a lot of good starts. We've seen what they're capable of. They were consistent in this one. Is there any areas, especially at the start of the third quarter, that you want to hone in more on?

KYRA ELZY: Well, yeah, I'm proud of this team overall. We went into the game talking about we had to bring our defense and rebounding. Defensive intensity was extremely important. The first game we let four players go above their average. We talked about that pregame along with the rebounds, 43 to 23.

We just set a goal of 60 or less. Was so proud of this team for doing so. I thought Brooklynn Miles came out early with the defensive intensity to just set the tone.

Consistency is the name of the game. This is a new season. It's post-season play. We're survive and advance. Just so proud of what we did today for 40 minutes.



THE MODERATOR: Ladies, you can be dismissed.

We'll continue with questions for Coach Elzy.

Q. Just talk about bench scoring. You outscored them 26-7. Talk about how important that was today.

KYRA ELZY: Well, it's huge. We had balanced scoring today, which I'm so proud. Every game we talk about 15-plus points from the bench. Pretty consistently we were able to get that. As we mentioned, I thought Eniya Russell came in and gave us a big spark off the bench, Saniah with seven.

Day in and day out, we prepare for this moment. We've done that all year. But Brooklynn Miles, I can't say her name enough. Really challenged her at the point guard position to be the leader. We've had to play without Maddie this year, unfortunately. But she stepped up big for us.

Q. I'd like to ask you more specifically about Brooklynn and controlling the pace of this game, how you saw her do that, how that benefited you.

KYRA ELZY: Well, go back and look at the last two games. I thought she has really grown up. We've talked about and watched film along with her position coach and Coach Huth.

When you have numbers, let's attack. You have to be able to deliver the ball on time, on target. If we do not get the ball out, get us in an offense so we're playing at a good pace.

I thought she's really grown up the last two games with that.

Along with MeMe Jenkins, I thought she made big plays when we had to have them today. What I love about this team, they're young, and we've been under the fire, and they've had to grow up on the job.

Just so proud of what they were able to do when the spotlight was on them today.

Q. I was wondering from an opposing coach's perspective, what stands out to you about Javyn?

KYRA ELZY: She is the type of player that keeps you up at night. The more film I watched last night, the more nervous I became. Probably after the fourth or fifth game, I texted the staff, and they were like, Go to bed.

Her ability to score inside and out, you know, she's

aggressive, she can rebound, great touch around the rim. For her to be able to extend the defense as she hits some 15-foot jumpers on us. She's had big games all year long.

An unbelievable player.

Q. You already mentioned the first time you played Georgia they out-rebounded you 43 to 23. Elaborate on the job that you guys done today.

KYRA ELZY: Well, yeah, we won the boards. That was one of our keys going in, that we had to win the boards. Team rebounding. We're undersized. But it was about heart, hustle, who wants it more.

We were disappointed in our showing as far as boards. One of the other things we keyed in on was finishing in the paint. We left 36 points on the board the first time that we played them. We got the layups, we just didn't capitalize. It was good to see us capitalize today.

Q. Despite Eniya Russell's day, she just had 28 minutes today, did you find yourself looking ahead today?

KYRA ELZY: No, it's one game at a time. We're not looking ahead.

The minutes balance out how they do. I'm more of a feel, gut, how the flow of the game is going, how she's playing, when we need to rest her, who is playing well at that time. That's more of a gut feel. I usually don't say, Oh, she's played 20 minutes, let me sit her down. It's just a feel of the game.

Q. Now that we can look ahead to the next game, a lot of lessons after Tennessee earlier in the season. How has your team grown to the point that you feel they'll be better prepared?

KYRA ELZY: We're just a better team. We've had time to grow up. We're still going to make some mistakes. I think we have learned along the way.

I thought we went to Knoxville, put up a tough fight. Obviously came out losing by 18, but a lot of lessons learned there.

At the end of the day, we're going to fight tomorrow. We're going to give our best. We'll go back and watch the film. One of the things we know we have to do against Tennessee is rebound and defend. So nothing has changed there.

Q. (No microphone.)

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KYRA ELZY: Yeah, Maddie is in concussion protocol.

Q. Could you elaborate on your three-point defense today. Georgia didn't have a single one.

KYRA ELZY: Just so proud. We started the game with switching. We talked about switching up. We worked on it for the last couple of days, switching up, making them put the ball on the floor and taking tough shots.

We did that. We were up. Our defensive game plan held today. So proud of the energy and the effort.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

KYRA ELZY: Thank you.

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