

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Tennessee Lady Volunteers

Coach Kellie Harper

Sara Puckett

Tess Darby

Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee 76, Kentucky 62

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the University of Tennessee. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

KELLIE HARPER: We're excited to be advancing in the tournament. Every game is going to be a tough, hard-fought game. Proud of our team for coming out with this win. Obviously Kentucky played really hard. I thought they did that for two days now. Hats off to them.

Just proud of our team for hanging in there and being poised, finishing the game strong.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Sara, you had an amazing game today. Can you talk about what went into your mindset coming into the game today.

SARA PUCKETT: I knew that personally I was going to be locked in because the team was locked in. We had a lot of great energy just yesterday getting in the gym, being together here. I knew I was going to carry that over to the game and do whatever I could, just have fun with the team.

I mean, it's getting down to the nitty-gritty, so we want to leave it all out there.

Q. Tess, could you talk about the mindset of the team coming into the SEC tournament.



TESS DARBY: Yeah, 100%. I think every team that is here wants to be playing on Sunday. Being the veteran team that we are, we have the experience being here on Sunday last year. We have high expectations and third set where we want to be.

Q. Obviously you played Alabama in the regular season. What do you remember from that game and what can you take into the next game?

TESS DARBY: It was at Alabama, it was a hard-fought game. Honestly, our whole mindset was with Kentucky. I trust our coaches that whenever we get back to the hotel we'll shift gears and it will be all Alabama.

SARA PUCKETT: I definitely feel like we've grown from that game in areas that we may have struggled necessarily, particularly for that game. Now we're just going to carry it over. Like Tess said, just trust the coaches, whatever they put in front of us tonight, get ready for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. We'll start with Coach.

Q. Obviously a tough game, first game in the tournament. Talk about overall being done with the first game.

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, I thought we had a pretty good mindset going in. I thought our team was pretty locked in and focused with good energy. We sure did not make a lot of shots in that first half, especially in the second quarter. Due to our defense, we were still in the game. We were able to find the bottom of the net in the second half.

Proud of our team for hanging in there and having poise throughout that game.

Q. Can you talk about second-half adjustments. What did you tell the team at halftime?

KELLIE HARPER: Honestly, we didn't make a whole lot of adjustments. We wanted to give them confidence. We wanted to get them out of the locker room to get a few



extra shots up at halftime. We talked about being focused to finish the layups, felt like the outside shots would come. We had good looks, we just had to knock 'em down.

Q. Looking ahead to Alabama, any thoughts?

KELLIE HARPER: Obviously they've been playing really well. They finished strong down the stretch. They've really been clicking. I think their identity is that they have toughness, they have shooters, they have people that can get to the basket.

You watch their offense, sometimes you lose sight of how good they are defensively. They do a great job game planning. We know it's going to be a huge challenge. Obviously they played well when we played them down there.

Hopefully we've grown. You don't walk out and it just happens; you got to go out and make it happen.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

KELLIE HARPER: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports