

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 7, 2024
Greenville, South Carolina, USA
Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Florida Gators

Kelly Rae Finley

Zippy Broughton

Aliyah Matharu

Postgame Press Conference

Florida 62, Vanderbilt 59

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the postgame press conference for Florida.

We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: First of all, thank you to everybody who tuned in tonight. I thought you guys saw an extremely high-level game. A lot of competitiveness on both ends.

But I was really proud of our team, our fight, our grit, our togetherness, our resolve. A lot of things that we've been working on throughout the course of the season in games haven't always gone our way. We figure we're about eight possessions out of fifth place in the league. That's kind of a tough pill to swallow sometimes.

When I say that, I mean three-point loss here, a two-point loss here. Today we were able to come out with the three-point victory. But we had a lot of grit, a lot of fight. It was a really fun basketball game.

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

Q. Aliyah, you had a decent game today (smiling). What was going through your mind today? A very important game, win or go home, also high-stakes matchup overall.

ALIYAH MATHARU: I think just really my team and my teammates. We've been through a lot this season. I don't know, right now it just feels like the perfect time for us to



just rise to the occasion.

Just knowing that we've been that team that go in the locker room and see sad faces and have people crying and frustrated, we wonder why not us. But today that's all I could think about was it's going to be us and I'm going to make sure that it's going to be us.

I wanted to set the tone on defense, I did. Came out. Thank God I didn't get a foul, but I got a charge (smiling). My teammates were all pumped up, we were on the same page. So proud of us.

Q. Was there any moment where it kind of clicked for you that you were on? At what moment today did you realize you had such a hot hand?

ALIYAH MATHARU: I mean, just coming out I knew. I was so locked in when Kelly was giving her pre-game speech, nothing could knock me off of my path of what I was thinking, how I wanted to lead my team tonight.

I just stuck with it and I had the hot hand.

Q. Zippy, you've served as a leader for this team. How did you feel about the backcourt's performance today?

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: Obviously, we got the win, so that's a phenomenal job in itself.

I mean, I'm looking at the stats. We obviously want to work on finishing the second half. We obviously going to celebrate the win today.

Aliyah, I just pointed to her steals that she had. Having four steals, who is this? Jeriah with three. Having people next to me. As a whole being able to play defensively and move together, that's really important for us.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, you can be dismissed. Thank you.

We'll continue with questions for head coach.

Q. What does this win mean for the team? Shocked a



lot of people. Put Florida back on the map in the SEC.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I think it's really big because they've been fighting, we've been fighting as a program all season. Winning is hard. We're in our second year of building something really, really special. You want those games early on to go your way, and they haven't. It's made us a tougher team.

We talk a lot about not being able to skip steps. Everything has a process. There's a process involved in learning, growing, improving as a player and a person and as a program. Unfortunately skipping a step is not an option.

Today was a huge step for us. I thought yesterday was, as well. But Aliyah's resolve, that's exactly who she is. She's a fierce competitor. She's the engine that makes us go. She wasn't going to let us lose tonight.

Q. There have been moments this season where the team has struggled to close out games. Vanderbilt cut it close, but you managed to come out on top. What do you think fell into place and was clicking with the team?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: You could see it in their eyes. We weren't playing fearfully. We were playing to win, not not to lose, if you will. Aliyah said in one of the last huddles, Zippy, Faith, Eriny, everybody, Kenza, the competition she came in with, Birdy. Everybody played their role to the best of their ability tonight. We weren't perfect, but you don't have to be perfect when you're a really good team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

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