

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8, 2024

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Alabama Crimson Tide

Coach Kristy Curry

Aaliyah Nye

Sarah Ashlee Barker

Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee 83, Alabama 61

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by the University of Alabama. We'll start with an open statement from Coach.

KRISTY CURRY: I think Tennessee played great today. Rickea and Jewel played really well. They were a handful for us. We never really found a solution with those two today.

We didn't rebound the ball like we did in Tuscaloosa. I think on a day like today, a lot of times you come in here and talk about what you don't do. I think you give credit to Tennessee today.

I want to say, too, I don't want it to take away from these kids have accomplished in the SEC regular season, the 23 wins. We're excited. There's a lot of competitors and a lot of teary eyes in there right now. At the end of the day I look forward to Selection Sunday with this group because I'm really proud of who they've been all year long.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about how you leave today and build a mindset for the rest of March.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, win or lose, I'm always going to give credit to Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. When I say that, He always gives us an opportunity. He always gives us another day. We're just going to go in with it with faith. At the end of the day, the whole year has been about staying together, having the faith, trusting each



other.

You never know what God has in store for you. You always look to that and look to him in these times and understand that you want to do your best in whatever you can.

At the end of the day, it sucks to lose, but I'm grateful for the opportunities and have a God that loves me no matter what. I know that's what everybody on this team thinks. You hold your head high. You move on. You learn from your mistakes. You understand that you get to go play in the NCAA tournament. That was one of our goals this year. Other goal was to be the top four team in the league. We did that.

You don't settle with that. That's what we did today. We understand that. So I think it's just putting this behind us, understanding that Tennessee had a great game, understanding that we're a great basketball team when we show up. Today we did not, unfortunately. You just got to go in, trust the coaches.

You don't question the coaches in a time like today. You don't question your team in a time like today. You understand you're going to lose games. You keep pushing forward. I know that I have Coach Kristy's back and she has mine. That's all that matters at the end of the day.

Q. Aaliyah, anything to add?

AALIYAH NYE: I agree with what SA said. I think we just have to stay connected between all of our losses. We've stayed connected. I think we just have to keep trusting in each other and don't let this loss separate us, just keep trusting in what the coaches have, trust in ourselves, just continue to work and be ready for the NCAA tournament.

Q. Sarah, you talked about settling, not settling. Today maybe there was. Do you feel like the mindset was lacking going in or...

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: No, I don't think the mindset was lacking at all. I just think our goal was to get to the next day, and we didn't do that. That's what I meant by



'settling'.

I just think you got to keep pushing. It's March. That's all you can do. You just got to trust in each other. We got here a certain way. We're not going to finish if we go backwards. We're going to go forwards and move on with it.

AALIYAH NYE: I think what she means, we didn't work as hard as we have in the past to get to this point that we are right now. We didn't play our best basketball today.

Q. Sarah, you talked pre-season at Media Day about how you weren't thinking about accolades. You get a first team All-SEC nod. Is it something about playing to have fun that gets you the success? Where is that connection?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I think I matured from my past three years. I'll accept that. I'll accept that at times I wasn't coachable. At times I lacked being -- holding my head down on failure. I accepted failure.

I think as a player, you have to grow, you have to understand where you want to be. I took accountability of that. I had conversations with my position coach, Coach Kristy, what could help me. A lot of people are like, What did you do in the off-season? You did all this skill.

It was a mind thing, a mental thing. All about how can I stay locked in, how can my emotions be out of it. That's what I changed this year.

At the end of the day, I will always give credit to the Lord for First Team SEC. That wasn't something that I was headhunting. I was headhunting to win basketball games. When I came to Alabama, a lot of people said, You're not going to win basketball games.

I want to look them in the face and be like, You're wrong. And I agree with it. They are wrong. Alabama is going to continue to win and show people that we are Alabama and we are on the rise.

It doesn't matter about what happened today. Of course it does because you don't want to lose. But that is my mindset, just playing hard. Everything else will fall into place. That's what I did this year.

But I also have coaches that support me, teammates that support me. If it wasn't for them, I would not be First Team All-SEC. Like I said, it's not me because I'm nothing without God. That's all I have to say.

THE MODERATOR: That's all the questions for the

student-athletes. We'll let them go back to the locker room and continue with questions for head coach.

Q. How do you come out of today, refresh the mindset for the NCAA tournament, especially knowing a similar situation of last year?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, I mean, positive. Make sure that we understand that what we have control over is being the best version of ourselves tomorrow. I mean, have the best possible day we can.

I think the mindset with this program is that when we've had a tough loss, this year this team has responded and they've not allowed that to accumulate. I really feel good about the people in the locker room, everyone around the program, that we learn and grow and get better.

We'll be better for today.

Q. It seems like folks were emotional in the locker room. What was the conversation postgame?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, with this team I don't think people understand. We returned five kids, two starters. 61% of our scoring was lost. 71% of our rebounding. 59% of our assists. Every day with this team has been just a learning opportunity. We've had five kids that have played in an SEC tournament.

When you look at what this team has done, considering that, it's not great coaches, it's great people in that locker room. So credit these kids.

I'm not sure Tennessee has a freshman. I think the experience factor today, we looked a little bit like wow. I don't know how you prepare for that other than you got to go through it to get to it.

What we've been through and how we've handled when we go through adversity, we've responded all year. I'm proud of this team. I'm proud of these two. They're amazing. We'll respond from today and get ready for Selection Sunday.

Q. Speaking of Tennessee, Jewel, can you speak to her a little bit?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, I mean, she was 1 for 9 in Tuscaloosa. I probably felt like deep down that wasn't going to happen again. I felt like we needed to limit her opportunities. I thought she got a lot in transition. I don't think we ever really got the ball stopped and loaded ball side. We didn't do a good job today of making sure we got to the touch. Credit Jewel. She had a much better day



today.

I thought Rickea was completely different from yesterday, which I think everyone thought she would be. We just allowed too many catches. But I thought we pressed up on her and she went up over us. What you saw today is a top three WNBA draft pick. Both of those two showed up today in a big way and had a big day.

Were we that poor defensively or were they really that good today? I think you have to credit those kids. We're not going to get negative about our kids. Our kids have done a really good job all year. We just didn't have a very good day at the right time to be able to counter offensively.

Q. I asked Coach Harper this. I'm interested in the day two and three of the SEC tournament. Some teams have played one game, then some who this is their first game. What is your philosophy on being fresh versus already having a game under your belt?

KRISTY CURRY: I'll never turn down the opportunity to finish in the top four and have a double bye in this league. That's your body of work. I think it's so important to understand the opportunity. There's going to be some teams that do special things for three days. I'm most proud of our body of work. I will never, ever say having an advantage of playing the first day or not the first day.

I will say this, like I said earlier: I think experience in this environment from past really does matter. At the end of the day we'll never turn down. I'm so proud of what Alabama is and what we're becoming.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

KRISTY CURRY: Thank y'all.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports