

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8, 2024

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Florida Gators

Coach Kelly Rae Finley

Zippy Broughton

Postgame Press Conference



Ole Miss 84, Florida 74

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Florida. We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: First of all, thanks for everybody who was able to tune in tonight. I thought that was a pretty good game.

Really, really proud of our team, how we've represented the University of Florida and our women's basketball program over the course of the season and in this tournament.

I'm especially proud of how my student-athletes chose to handle themselves tonight in the game. I thought they did so with class, with dignity, with respect, and toughness.

Our three seniors are elite players, and even better people. When you talk about elevating a program in year two, they've done some pretty remarkable things.

We talk in our program about you can't skip steps. Unfortunately we want to, but that's not something that oftentimes gets to happen. Sometimes when it does happen, you're not prepared for the step that's to come next, right?

I thought over the course of this season and in this tournament we took a lot of positive steps forward thanks to Faith and Zippy and Leilani. I think they sacrificed a lot for the University of Florida and our women's basketball team. I'm extremely proud of them.

In regards to the game tonight, I thought it was an extremely physical game. I think that's not the way the

game of basketball is meant to be played, but that's my own personal opinion.

I thought we fought really, really hard, three games in three days. I'll leave it at that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Zippy.

Q. Florida blew expectations out of the water with their tournament performance. As one of the leaders of the team, what are your thoughts on how you did?

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: Well, if you would have asked about a few weeks ago if anyone would have thought we would have got this far, they would have laughed. So I think we're proud of ourselves, first and foremost, for getting this far.

It's obviously not a consolation prize. Obviously we want to go further. At the end of the day you want to win.

But we are proud of ourselves. We have to stay in the moment, not take little things like this for granted. So I'll say we're grateful.

Q. Coach Kelly mentioned extra physical play tonight factored into the game. How did you deal with the physicality of Ole Miss' defense and play?

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: Yeah, obviously it's something you just want to push through and not obviously get involved with the refs and whatnot. Sometimes it is going to be physical. That's what we got the weight room for (laughter).

But no, it just showed that it's something that we need to improve on, yeah.

Q. Last week on Senior Day Coach Finley talked about the foundation that you, Leilani and Faith helped build. What does that mean to you as things come to a close?

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: Yeah, it's all about leaving a legacy, leaving something behind. It's not about what you



do now, but what you can do for generations after you.

I just told Laila, it really starts with character. She's our only freshman. What I did this year was only for her. Obviously I have other teammates and whatnot, but she's our freshman, she's our baby. I wanted to carry myself each and every day to show her to be a great example. I wanted to show her that it's okay to not be so serious, have fun when you play. It's okay to make mistakes and keep pushing through it. It's okay to have adversity and come to the other side with a win.

I just wanted to do that for her and obviously my other teammates as well. What we did this year is obviously going to carry on to seasons after this.

Q. Talk about the SEC tournament as a whole, how special it can be, what it's become.

ZIPPY BROUGHTON: Yeah, I mean, the SEC is the best conference in the country. We have the biggest platform in the country. It's an honor and pleasure to be able to play on this stage and get the exposure that we do. I am so grateful to the SEC for all that they've done for us and for myself.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and take questions for Coach.

Q. How is Aliyah holding up after the --

KELLY RAE FINLEY: After the hit to the head?

Q. Yeah.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: She's going to be all right. She's tough. She's tough as nails.

Q. Going into the game itself, it was a photo finish towards the end. What were your thoughts on the final few minutes of the game? Obviously already touched on the very physical play.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Yeah, looks like 70 free throws were shot. That's a lot of free throws. Looks like about, let's see if my math is correct, 53 fouls. That's a lot of fouls.

I thought that we fought till the end. We needed to come up with some loose balls. We needed to come up with some free throw rebounds. I thought that was the difference and the separator.

Q. Looking at the tournament as a whole, how do you feel about your squad right now seeing what they've been able to build on?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I mean, I love 'em. They know that. We've heard a lot this year about how we've fallen short. We're a really talented group. We have a really special group. Like I said in my opening statement, you don't get to skip steps.

However, when you're looking at post-season play, you do the math, it's eight or nine possessions. We lost several games by one possession, two possessions or less. We just need to learn how to close those games.

It's toughness. And winning is hard. Winning is hard. But your question was how do I feel about our team. I love 'em. I love who they are. I love what they stand for. I love how they carry themselves.

I think to be a strong, confident woman, how you carry yourself when things don't go your way is your character. We talk a lot in our program about never lose grip on who you are in moments of disappointment. This would be one of those moments.

But Florida basketball is on the rise. We've got really exciting class coming in. We've got a really exciting group of players returning. It's because of Zippy, Leilani and Faith that they have a great foundation to build off of.

Q. What you've done with your program is really allow the public in. The fan experience has improved. Is that something when you took over the job you really wanted to do?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I appreciate you saying that. If you haven't seen our series Unlaced, it's a pretty exceptional series. I encourage you to go watch it. It outlines the stories of our student-athletes, exactly who they are and what their story is.

I don't have to protect our student-athletes from anything or anybody because I'm proud of who they are and how they speak. They're strong women. They're respectful. They're intelligent. They're competitive. Don't get me wrong when I say all those things. We want to win a championship. We want to be the first team at the University of Florida in women's basketball to do so.

Like Zippy said when talking about Laila, your character matters. Your character and how you do things matter. Yeah, I mean, the more people that want to be around our program, we've got exceptional student-athletes, I'd love for them to be a part of us, as well.

Q. What did you learn about yourself this year both as a person and a coach?



KELLY RAE FINLEY: You always have great questions, going back to Media Day. That's a great question.

I think as we go into post-season and after the conclusion of the season, there's always time to reflect. But I think being able to adapt and adjust as a coach is a really, really great skill to have. I think I've improved in that.

I think that understanding how to move a group is coaching. That's coaching. People can say it's X's and O's, this and that, statistics and numbers. We all have people on our staffs for that. We all do. We're all well equipped. We're in the SEC. We have the best of the best.

I think as a coach, you're a mentor and a motivator. Your job is to hold standards and push your team to achieve much more than maybe they think that they can, make them believe in themselves, and do things together as a group. We have the whole rest of our lives to live to not be a part of a team. It's not something everybody always has an opportunity to do.

I think would say adapting, adjusting, motivating to say the least.

Q. Marquesha Davis on Ole Miss, big night tonight. What did she do well?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: She had a great night. She was really attacking that baseline hard. She's able to elevate. We think she's a really, really talented player. She was able to turn that corner, get in there. I think she shot 17 free throws. That's a lot of free throws, 17 free throws on 33 points on 19 attempts.

But she's explosive. She's hard-nosed. She was able to get to that baseline side and turn that corner.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Thank you.

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