

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

**Tennessee Lady Volunteers**  
**Coach Kellie Harper**

**Rickeya Jackson**

**Jewel Spear**

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 74, Tennessee 73

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by the University of Tennessee. We'll take questions for the student-athletes at this time.

**Q. I know it's a really tough end. Can you talk about the last quarter. What was going through your minds?**

RICKEA JACKSON: We were just doing what we knew we could do, playing hard, staying in the fight. I'm just proud of how we just continued to fight despite the score, despite anything. We just continued to fight. I'm just so proud of this group.

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, I thought we settled in pretty well in the second half. We were down by a lot, but we just kept talking about cutting the lead. And Kea did a really good job of finishing down the stretch, as well.

**Q. How do you bring this energy into the tournament, knowing you almost cut a 23-point deficit?**

RICKEA JACKSON: Just continuing to do the little things. I felt like we really focused in on our defense. We got the rebounds we needed. We executed down the stretch. Just what we did in those three quarters, how we just continued to fight, it was just great to see.

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, I would say pretty much the same thing. We've been knowing that we've been playing pretty good basketball. I think y'all got to see that today, got to see our toughness, so...

**Q. Jewel, what happened in that first quarter, the start of the second quarter, where you guys got in that big hole? Were they doing something different?**

JEWEL SPEAR: I would say they got downhill pretty fast, pushing in transition. Coach said we needed to match up a little bit quicker. I feel like we fixed that in the second half so they didn't get as many transition points. We had to guard them in halfcourt, which is better for us.

**Q. The clutch gene that you have, is that something you've had your entire career or...**

RICKEA JACKSON: I feel like Tennessee and my teammates give me confidence. They put the ball in my hands. I see them when I see them. The chemistry over the years have come. I feel like our chemistry is just getting better and better. We're peaking at the right time. I feel like the confidence that my coaches and teammates give me put me in those moments to want to make those plays.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let the student-athletes return to the locker room at this time. Thank you, ladies. We'll continue with questions for head coach.

**Q. We asked you this after South Carolina, the fight you guys showed, that's got to say something about where this team is, what it can build on.**

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, I've got a tough group in that locker room. Can't say that's how I would have defined them earlier in the year, but they have really taken on that challenge. That was on full display today, man. I'm so proud of 'em.

God, I just hate that for them. I wanted that so bad for our team (tearing up).

**Q. Can I take us through the defensive strategy y'all had on the final possession.**

KELLIE HARPER: Didn't call a timeout because they did not have one. I wanted Tamari to be in the paint so they couldn't get a pass to the paint. We were trying to get



Rickea back there in the play. Obviously at the end of a game like that, everyone is a shooter because you could luck one in in that moment.

We didn't get where we needed to to get that defended.

**Q. What do you take from this going into the rest of the season both on the positive and the negative?**

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, I think, one, we've been playing good basketball. We've been tough. I think the positive is just the fight that we have. We know what we've got inside us.

I think the negative would be just our start offensively. We were a little panicked, it looked like, a little out of sorts. But we settled in after that first quarter.

You have such a stagnant first quarter, it puts you in the hole.

**Q. What is the plan going forward? A couple days off to decompress?**

KELLIE HARPER: Yes, they will. I planned on being here tomorrow, so I've not looked at the schedule yet. But we'll get 'em some time off this week and get them ready to go.

**Q. Could you speak to Rickea in that last quarter, then also what you expect from her?**

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, Rickea is a big shot-maker. The moment is never going to be too big for her. She's got a competitive drive and a confidence about her that gives her an opportunity for success in those moments. I'm proud of her.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

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