

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

**South Carolina Gamecocks**

**Coach Dawn Staley**

**Raven Johnson**

**MiLaysia Fulwiley**

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 74, Tennessee 73

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by the University of South Carolina. We'll start with questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Raven, on the inbound pass, you just saw Kamilla there and wanted to get it in?**

RAVEN JOHNSON: Well, Coach drew up the play, and I just followed her guidelines. I trust her. Coach told Kamilla: Shoot the ball. She shot the ball with confidence.

And that's Boyer. Boyer works with her every day on the shot. It translated to the game.

**Q. Raven, I know you're very close with Kamilla. The first three of her career. What does it mean to see someone have a game like that?**

RAVEN JOHNSON: I'm still shocked. I can't believe that she made it. I can't believe she shot the three. Usually she'd be like, I'm not shooting no three.

I was just excited for her. It's God's plan, honestly. I just give it to God. Coach Staley, the best coach in the nation (smiling).

**Q. MiLaysia, what happened in those final two quarters, especially the fourth quarter where they made that run? Looked like you had things under control in the first half. What changed there?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: I feel like they just came out and

they just wanted to win. Me and my team, we did a great job just going out, executing what Coach drew up on the board. I feel like once we started listening to her, then things started turning our way.

**Q. Raven, did you think you guys had lost this game?**

RAVEN JOHNSON: No. Because if Coach is comfortable, I'm at confidence when -- well, honestly, I'm not going to -- I was about to cry out there. I looked at Coach. She's like, We're good. Okay, if she say we're good, we're good. If she thinks we're good, then we should think we're good.

**Q. MiLaysia, you had such a good game throughout. What went well tonight?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: I feel like I was just giving what the defense gave me, staying poised throughout the whole game. I usually get speed up, so I just told myself that I was going to stay calm and stay poised today, and it worked out in my favor.

**Q. When was the last time you were part of a dog pile that big? Is that usually your thing?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: I never been in that predicament. But it was crazy. I'm so proud she made the shot. So proud of my team.

RAVEN JOHNSON: Honestly, I didn't want to lose. I was just thinking about winning. Just gave me a flashback of last year. I didn't want to go through that again.

I don't know. I think all of us have flashbacks of last year. We definitely don't want to lose. We want to keep winning.

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. What was that experience like? With this team, we talked all along about how they don't know what they don't know. They still pulled this out when it looked like all the odds were against them.**



DAWN STALEY: Let me just say this. Tennessee played some excellent basketball, like excellent. I mean, they coached. They made adjustments. They clawed their way back in the game. They took the momentum.

It's just uncommon favor. Like it's uncommon favor. I do have to mention this. Every game, Mrs. Boston sends out scripture, send us out messages. I'm looking at my phone. She just texted about 6:44. She said, I told you.

She is the one person that has prayed over our program while Aliyah was here and probably more that she's not here to have the same type or more success than we had when her daughter was here.

Now, that is hard to believe. It's really hard to believe when she says things like that. But the more and more she says it, the more and more great things are happening to our program.

I'm just happy that we have a prayer warrior like Mrs. Boston every day. I told her today, When you send me these messages, it gives me a perfect peace amongst everything that we're doing and having to deal with. I just really appreciate that.

But I don't know if I answered your question. I've been around a lot of basketball. None happier than I am for our players. They work hard. Really it flashed in front of me. What are the headlines going to say? Some of y'all have written y'all's stories already, got to change it up a little bit.

But I'm just happy for our players because I don't want them to endure that like right now. It could happen in the future. I hope not. But I'm happy that we lived to see another day, and I'm family for our fam, our fans as well. I know they spend their hard-earned money coming here expecting us to be in the championship game on Sunday.

We found a way. We found a way to make it happen.

**Q. You mentioned Mrs. Boston sending you text messages throughout the season. It brings you peace. Can you tell us how you help your own players be at peace. You have a lot of new faces, first time in this tournament. What do you do to help them stay poised in these moments?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, I'm a little fire and brimstone at times. In these situations, I really don't stress out. I'm going to be able to handle whatever. If we lost the game, I'm going to be able to handle it, be able to find the words to comfort them. I don't get too high with the highs or low with the lows. I try to maintain. That's the same messaging I give to our players.

If they seem pretty calm, it's because we take them through exercises in practice, we take them through exercises during games. They're young and carefree, to be quite honest. It's some of that, as well.

**Q. Can you walk us through the last 30 seconds. What was the play that you drew out? Did it go to plan?**

DAWN STALEY: The last 30 seconds?

**Q. The last 10 seconds.**

DAWN STALEY: The last 10 seconds? We had an opportunity. We had possession of the ball. Somehow we turned the ball over. It was a backcourt violation. I don't even know how that ball slipped through Tess' hands. I was calling a timeout if she would have caught the ball. I didn't anticipate her missing that ball like that. Bad kickball player. I wouldn't pick her in a kickball game (smiling).

They gained possession. I thought we did a good job. I thought it was a five-second count, I really did. But they got the ball inbounds. We did a great job of defending at the rim. They got the rebound, put it back in. We called a timeout.

Quite honestly, I made a bad move because I thought we had the ball in front of our bench. I drew up a play in front of our bench. We ended up having to take it out underneath the basket. We were all discombobulated. At that point I just wanted our team to get a shot at the basket.

Once we did, we had the foul. Then they went back down the court. Thankfully they missed two free throws. Gave us an opportunity to set up that play.

MiLaysia, we put her in the game because she had some late-game heroics or some late shot-clock heroics and some end-of-quarter heroics for us. We wanted to put her in the game to see if she could get a good look at a shot. She got fouled. I really wanted Pao to be in the position to catch and shoot. They did a great job on Pao all night long. I was skeptical about giving her the ball.

I just told Raven to throw it high to Kamilla. Kamilla passed it to Pao. I'm like, No, they're not going to let Pao get any daylight at the end. I yelled at Kamilla, said, Shoot it. I added some more words to that, but I can't say it right here (smiling).

**Q. You've been trying to get Kamilla to shoot it more. Why doesn't she shoot it more?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, she's probably stuck in the mode of coaches not wanting bigs to shoot. Get on the block, score on the block. I mean, maybe this will open the lid for her to shoot a little bit more. She's got a decent shot. She's got a decent midrange. She's got a decent three. She's always going to be open. Maybe she'll shoot it now.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

DAWN STALEY: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

**Q. The bench had 33 points tonight. Were you aware of that? The bench was outscoring the starters for much of the game. How impactful is that?**

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, I mean, one of the keys in each and every one of our games is our bench production. We pride ourselves on it. Honestly, because we got a lot of players that could be starters in other programs, but they choose to come to South Carolina. I don't think they choose to come off the bench, but they choose to take a role in which they could be equally as effective.

Tess is doing a great job. MiLaysia... Our youngsters are doing a really great job. They give us a totally different look. They can attack the basket. They're floor spacers. Not a whole lot of people are probably putting them on their scouting report, so it gives us an opportunity to utilize them in a way which frees them up to do some things.

**Q. MiLaysia had a real maturity. Can you speak to her poise as a freshman tonight and throughout the season.**

DAWN STALEY: MiLaysia is constantly improving. Like if you would have saw her like two months ago, I mean, she really didn't get back in transition. She really got lost in halfcourt defense. She didn't put pressure on the ball.

She can be an elite defender. At times she's an elite defender. She got a steal at halfcourt and laid the ball up. Obviously when we're looking at what we're looking at, we needed those two points. Points didn't come by very often in the fourth quarter.

But her maturation process is great. She wants to be great. She takes criticism well. She doesn't like it in the moment. But if you come back and you explain it to her, she has a really good understanding of it.

Like I thought she played really undisciplined yesterday. I talked to her today, she said she hadn't watched the game yet but she was going to go back and watch it. One of our other coaches talked to her and reported back to me that she was like, It's going to be better today, it's going to be different.

That's how she operates.

