

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 6, 2025
Greenville, South Carolina, USA
Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Florida Gators

Coach Kelly Rae Finley

Liv McGill

Laila Reynolds

Postgame Press Conference

Florida 63, Alabama 61

LIV MCGILL: Thank you all for being here. Go Gators. We'll open to any questions (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: You can take my job one day, if you like.

We're joined by Florida. Coach, do you want us to give us a brief statement.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I think Liv just gave it.

Thanks once again for staying up so late, for being here, to all Gator Nation for tuning in tonight.

I think you can see how hard this team has worked over the last couple months to be gelling at the right time. It's a tremendous feeling.

That was a very, very talented, good, experienced Alabama team that we just beat. We always talk about earning everything. I think we earned that win tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Liv, career high for you. Locked in is an understatement for your mindset. Can you describe how you were feeling throughout the game?

LIV MCGILL: Yeah, throughout the game I felt pretty confident, just having that talk with my teammates, the coaches before the game. Laila right here, she actually helped me out before the game, giving me a prayer,



praying together. That was big for me.

During the game, staying connected, staying very poised. That's what I try to do to keep my teammates calm, yeah.

Q. There were some missed free throws at the end, but you were able to regroup on defense. How did you go into the final possessions?

LAILA REYNOLDS: For sure. I mean, I'm the one that missed the free throws, so I'll say coming up for my teammates on the defensive end because I wasn't hitting the free throws, just knowing that my team got my back however.

LIV MCGILL: I'll add on to that.

You know how to hit free throws. I just knew one was going in. That's all we needed. She stepped to the line every time and shot with confidence. That's all that mattered. We huddled, regrouped and played good defense.

Q. Laila, you didn't reference what came after the free throws, which was the game-sealing block. What was going through your mind at that play?

LAILA REYNOLDS: Nothing was going through my mind except getting the stop for my team. Staying into my key is the biggest thing for me.

Q. Kelly mentioned yesterday you had an incredible defensive performance against Auburn. Tonight was a good night for you. Has there been any extra steps, motivation coming into this tournament for you on the defensive side of the ball?

LAILA REYNOLDS: Having to guard the team's best player, then going 4 for 18, I would say I will have to show up for my team on the defensive end producing however I can because I know my team needs me at the end of the day.

Q. Liv, yesterday you ended the game with a freak



play and one, hurt your ankle, came back out here tonight. What was that like for you? Was there any doubt in your mind you were going to suit up?

LIV MCGILL: No doubt in my mind. Went straight back to the hotel, got treatment. Just prayed. God took care of that, put His healing hands over me. There was no doubt I was playing tonight.

Q. A lot of people use the words effort and dog, I believe. What would you say differentiates you from any other freshman or any other player in the country at this point?

LIV MCGILL: Yeah, I would say my unselfishness. It's not about me, it's about my team. I wouldn't have 29 points without my team, without my coaches, my teammates believing in me.

So unselfishness is how I would describe myself and my play as a point guard.

Q. Last year Florida made a surprise run, beat Vandy in the SEC tournament. This year they knocked off a bad opponent in the second round. How are you hoping to keep this alive for tomorrow?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: With our effort, I was going to say. With our effort, how we play every day. It's how we practice. Liv is a freshman. Laila is a sophomore. We're just getting better and better and better.

I mean, I expect big things from both of them. I thought their composure, their poise and mentality is what set them apart tonight.

But we competed well against 'Bama the last two times out. LSU is a very, very talented basketball team. But we have to focus on us.

Q. How did it feel to get a win for big Shay on her birthday?

LIV MCGILL: Felt great. Felt great. Said happy birthday in the huddle.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: No class tomorrow (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach Finley.

Q. Can you talk about Me'Arah at the beginning of the game? What was her effect on the game, especially when Shay was in foul trouble?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: She was outstanding tonight. I think you guys can see what the future holds for Me'Arah. I know our coaching staff and our team does.

Defensively yesterday was a hard guard, right? Auburn is very, very quick. But Me'Arah is extremely talented, she's bought into her process. Without her ability to compete for us tonight, we wouldn't have won that game.

Q. Talk about Liv. Whenever the team needed her to step up, she did. I didn't know if she was going to miss.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: The corner three was really the one that set it apart. I think she got fouled on that one, too.

It's who she is. I said it on set just a little bit ago. She's earned everything she's ever gotten her whole life. That's just who she is. It's a huge part of why she came here to Florida, to make the Gators great.

She's doing that every day with her work ethic, her preparation. There's a lot of pressure that goes into being a freshman point guard. Laila has done an exceptionally good job as well coming off hip surgery in the off-season, just being about 11 weeks into her sophomore year. Playing that point guard position.

To have a freshman and a sophomore up here with the poise and composure that they showed late game, really says tremendous things for our program and the direction we're headed.

Q. You mentioned this entire season when they get that winning feeling, they're going to keep going with it. How important that is for the team?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Sometimes as a coach, there were games that last time out against Alabama I felt like we had played well, but we ran out of gas at the end. It was after that game I felt like, man, maybe we felt defeated.

As a coach, you really want their hard work to pay off. But we talk a lot about just 'cause you work hard doesn't mean you're going to get what you want.

Tonight was a perfect example, and last night, of watching a group of young women succeed in their efforts and stay diligent in their preparation, and earning what they got.

Q. Second year in a row where you make a run in the SEC tournament. What is it about this team that allows them to click when the lights are the brightest at these points in the season?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I think it's belief. Liv kind of touched on that. We're an inexperienced team in terms of minutes played throughout the course of the season. So we wish things had gone our way just a little bit earlier. But there's no way to speed that process up.

Experience is the greatest teacher of all. At this point you've seen everybody in the conference already once, so that helps a lot.

Q. There's been a lot of talk around Laila, Liv and Me'Arah being the future of this program. They're good friends off the court.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: They're roommates.

Q. What is it like having three promising up-and-comers have a strong bond like that?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: It's everything. You can build your program one of two ways at this point. In the world of NIL, we've chosen to build our program through development. It might take a little bit longer, but I think it's the old school way of doing things. It's a good way of doing things.

I'd like to add to that mix, Kylee Kitts. She redshirted for us this season. We're extremely excited to have her on the floor with those three moving forward.

But for right now our focus is on LSU, this team, this season, and competing for our seniors. A team loves to compete together, it's a really fun thing to watch. This team loves doing that.

Q. Was there any extra motivation because of Shay's birthday?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Shay is a tremendous personality. I thought she had a very good game tonight. I told her in that last huddle... She said, I don't know if I think I had it.

We talked about whatever it takes, whatever it takes to get the job done to earn what we thought we wanted, right? It always feels good to win on your birthday. Liv's birthday was a couple days ago, so that's a fun thing to celebrate, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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