

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Vanderbilt Commodores Coach Shea Ralph

Iyana Moore

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 84, Vanderbilt 63

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Vanderbilt. We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach, then take questions.

SHEA RALPH: First I want to say hats off to South Carolina. Obviously a storied program with the tradition of excellence. They played very well today.

Also want to give credit to my team. I thought that we fought hard and we looked much more like ourselves in the second half of the game. We settled in. Our shot selections were better, our defense was better. That's the best of who we are. When we are that team, we can compete with anyone in the country. I fully believe that.

Then we made mistakes down the stretch. We didn't score. It was three or four minutes left in the game. Obviously rebounding has plagued us all year. I thought we gave up some rebounds. I thought our rotations defensively when we were trapping towards the end of the game were poor, giving up wide-open layups. Then they had 18 points off of our 16 turnovers, which to me just means they were untimely and inopportune.

When we played like the team played in the third quarter and most of the fourth quarter, we're a team to be reckoned with in the NCAA tournament.

I'm disappointed we're not moving on, but pleased with the effort I saw today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Iyana.

Q. Shea has mentioned you're a leader on the floor.

What were the conversations like with your teammates?

IYANA MOORE: I think just doing the intangible things, giving positive touches, talking positively to each other, having great body language. That will go a long way for us. Continuing to tell them that goes a long way. So just continuing to do that.

Q. Obviously you wish the result was different. What do you feel like your team showed this week?

IYANA MOORE: I feel like we showed that we can fight and we can compete with anybody. When we're playing together, we're playing as a group, unity, as one, we can do anything we put our minds to.

All we need is believers. We have belief in our locker room, and that's all we need.

THE MODERATOR: Iyana, thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach Ralph.

Q. What do you feel the biggest adjustments were in the second half?

SHEA RALPH: I feel like reminding our team of who we were, making sure that we took better shots. We needed to move the ball from side to side a little bit. We needed to simplify some things where we were able to screen, get downhill, roll, making some movements off the ball.

I thought they did a really good job trying to keep out of Iyana's and Mikayla's hands. When we put Mitch in there, she was able to do some of those things. Rebound, screen. That really helped us and created some momentum.

Again, locking up on defense. Our defense was not good the first half of the game. When we defend and rebound, we are a much, much better team because we can create some opportunities in transition, right? That doesn't mean we're going to score in transition, but it opens up the floor a little bit for us.



This team plays better when they're more free. But we have to be a little bit less free than we were in the first half in terms of our shot selection. There's a happy medium there. I think you saw the tale of two teams. The worst of it in the first half, then when we made some adjustments, settled down a little bit, got back to who we are in the second half, we were much better, much more competitive.

Q. When South Carolina ends a game like that, 16-0 run, how difficult is it to stop that, stop the bleeding?

SHEA RALPH: I don't think it's difficult. I mean, it's definitely not what you want to have the last three minutes of a basketball game. I had two timeouts. I ended up using one of 'em. I thought we might need the next one. Turns out that we didn't.

I think it's just having resolve. We were trapping a little bit. Our rotations weren't great. I would say it felt maybe a little bit deflating. That's what she's talking about in terms of body language, belief, positive touches.

As a coach, I'm looking out there, you see after six or eight points, it's deflation, right? We can't be that. It's basketball. It's a game of runs. It's not a great time to have a run for the other team, but we have to be better and let it be 4 to 6 points and not 16. Hopefully we can take that lesson away from today.

Q. The third quarter, you saw your team do some good things. What was your specific message to them coming into the third quarter? How do you build off of that when you think of the NCAA tournament?

SHEA RALPH: My messages are always pretty simple. I think for us, it's reminding them who they are. You have to remember, we're in year four of a revitalization, right? We've done things this year in our program that have never been done before. That's why most of these kids came here. Coach Tom did the pregame speech. He said you don't have to see to believe. You have to believe to see. That's what we have to remind them in moments where it can maybe feel a bit overwhelming when you're playing a South Carolina who has seen it before. They've won national championships. They've been there.

My team wants to do those things, but we haven't seen it yet. So we have to remind them to believe in themselves. We are a team that can compete with anyone. They proved it today. That was it. Very, very simple.

We know who we are. There are moments where it gets away from us. We're a young team, we have some

veteran leaders. In moments like this where we haven't been in yet since we've been here, they have to remember to believe in them and stick to who they are.

Q. Neutral site, where we are in South Carolina's history in this building, how much do you think the environment factored in to your first half struggles?

SHEA RALPH: Yeah, you want to say it doesn't, but it does. I think they have a traveling fan base, travel very far. But it is a great environment. Whether they're cheering for us or not, it's great to have that kind of environment in a women's basketball game.

I just tell them to enjoy it. It can create momentum either way if you let it - if you let it. It's an awesome environment. So pretend they're cheering for you. Just enjoy the fact that there's butts in the seats out here wanting to see a great game, and hopefully we were able to give that to them.

Q. Is it impossible to have a truly neutral site?

SHEA RALPH: I don't know. That's a great question. I don't think so. I don't think anything is impossible when it comes to our game. I think you can just control what you can control. The fact that people are traveling to support their teams, you see just as much orange out there. Same thing yesterday. We were able to use that in our favor.

Hopefully we'll build a fan base here that will travel as well. In a couple years we'll have this conversation and I'll tell you the momentum swung our way because of it.

Q. Could you speak to South Carolina's depth? Their bench outscored yours 33 to 4. How tough is it to defend?

SHEA RALPH: That's basketball. I mean, I have really good players, too. If I didn't think that they were good players, they wouldn't be on my bench.

South Carolina does have a lot of depth. They have a lot of great players. But today they were able to be more impactful than the kids that we put in the game.

But my starters, I thought, did a great job, as well. I know that sits out there with South Carolina and UConn and the players that go there, have been going there for decades. I was on the other side of that for a long time.

We came up against just as many teams whose players believed and it doesn't matter where they came from. I think if you get caught up in that conversation, you're missing the point of competing and playing the game of

basketball.

They have great players, but so do we. Today their players played a little bit better than ours. Hopefully it will teach us a lesson so when we meet again, it will be a different story.

Q. This time last year you were on the bubble. Now you're comfortably in the NCAA tournament. What does this next week look like for you guys?

SHEA RALPH: This next week looks like doing our very best as a coaching staff to prepare our team for a big moment. I think we'll have another opportunity like we had today. I want to make sure that we feel mentally, physically, emotionally prepared for that moment. That the kids that are out there really believe in the fact they can accomplish the things we want to accomplish, the things we set out to accomplish in the beginning of the year.

I think we're one of the best teams in the country when we play like we did today for the majority of the second half. Now we have to make sure we do that for 40 minutes.

That's up to the staff, up to the players to show up and do the work. Thankfully we have some time to do it. I'm excited to get back to work with them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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