

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

**South Carolina Gamecocks**  
**Coach Dawn Staley**

**Chloe Kitts**

**MiLaysia Fulwiley**

Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 84, Vanderbilt 63

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

**Q. Chloe, talk about the fourth quarter performance. Seemed like you were able to take over the game.**

CHLOE KITTS: I was just going out there and playing confident. My coaches, and the point guard, kept saying 14, which is kind of get the ball to me. I just delivered. I was just going out there.

DAWN STALEY: Thanks.

CHLOE KITTS: What?

DAWN STALEY: You just told them our play.

CHLOE KITTS: Sorry.

**Q. MiLaysia, very beginning, your energy was there from the moment you started the game. Walk me through the behind-the-back pass. What do you take away the most from this game?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: The behind-the-back pass, coach drew it up for me to go, she didn't say score or shoot. I realized that if I attack middle, something would open up. I seen Sania from the corner of my eye, so I just threw it and she finished it.

Throughout the game I was just thinking about win, do what I can do to help my team win. That's what I need to



do. I feel like that's what I went out there and did.

**Q. MiLaysia, when you started the 16-0 run, Chloe had the first 7 points of that. How important is it to have Chloe as that go-to player?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: It's very important. I mean, to play with a player like Chloe is great. Puts a lot of less work on you. I feel like when Chloe is doing good, it makes all of us, motivates all of us to want to do good, motivates the post players to do whatever they can do to help her succeed.

When Chloe is playing like that, we're a hard team to beat. I'm proud of her.

**Q. Chloe, not at your home gym, but obviously the crowd is a big factor. How important was that for you guys today?**

CHLOE KITTS: It's amazing having all those fans out there supporting us. They're so loud. It always help us.

**Q. MiLaysia, your bench outscored them 33-4. What is it about South Carolina that Coach is able to get everybody to play together, be unselfish?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: I think here we all just have the same mindset, and that's winning. Whether you're doing it from coming off the bench or starting the game. We all just want to win.

I think the first group, they pushed the bench to be a better version of ourselves. In practice, we push every day. I feel like it just flows in the game. When the bench come in, our starters know that we have their back.

**Q. This game had a lot of momentum swings. How were you able to reharneess it after losing the momentum in a neutral site?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: I feel like we have a lot of players, we have a lot of depth. That's when it comes in our favor. I feel like a lot of players on our team can go out there and

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get the job done.

But it all takes us to come together and work as a team and do the little things, the tangibles.

We know teams are going to make a run. It's the SEC, the best conference in the country. We just have to be prepared. I feel like we were very prepared today.

**Q. MiLaysia, there was a timeout after Vanderbilt cut the lead to 5. What did you learn about your team when you took control of the game the rest of the way?**

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: I felt like I learned that none of us are punks. We all want to meet the moment, and I think we did. I feel like we came together and that's very important for us. I love my team. We love each other.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, you can be dismissed. We'll continue with questions for Coach Staley.

**Q. Some visible frustration from your part in the third quarter. What was your frustration or what were you most frustrated with in the third quarter? A lot of conversations with the officials, as well.**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, it was on us. We did not make good decisions out there. A lot had to do with what Vandy was doing to us. They doubled us. They pressured us. They forced us into some turnovers that created some easy baskets for them, that created some momentum for them, that cut into our lead.

Just bad basketball. I mean, we mentioned it at halftime, like, we're playing really good basketball. Really good basketball is contagious, and really bad basketball is contagious. We got a chance to see the face of both of 'em.

Part of that was because of what Vandy was pressuring us to do. Part of that was just decision making. Playing a little bit faster, which probably Vandy had a lot to do with that.

So I was happy that we could get a unit in there that could just play well together on both sides of the basketball. It took us a little bit of time to figure out what unit that would be.

**Q. The timeout at the end of the fourth quarter, the 16-0, what was the conversation like with your team?**

DAWN STALEY: I don't even remember what I said. It was about making plays at that point. It was about shoring up how we wanted to defend the ball screens. It was

making sure that we were running sets that get the hot hand on the ball, which was Chloe.

We allow Lay to get the ball in the open floor and pretty much play-make. Fortunately for us, it worked out.

**Q. Chloe became that go-to player for you. What did you think of her performance today and how important was that for you guys?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, this is really who Chloe is. Starting to play very consistent basketball. She wants the ball in her hands. She wants to be a play-maker. She wants to be the one that can score it or dish it to a teammate.

I thought her teammates did a really good job of finding her. I thought she did a really good job of making the play. We called her number and she delivered for us.

I would imagine that this is kind of how she envisioned her entire season going, but it didn't go that way. I mean, it was a little bit up and down, inconsistent. But Chloe is strong enough mentally, physically to be able to handle the rigors of this league. No one is just going to kill it every single night.

If you don't have the mental fortitude to stay with it through the ups and downs, you won't see consistent play like this at any point in the season.

**Q. There's a lot of girls on your bench that could start other places. In the recruiting process, what type of a person do you have to get to fit into that team mentality? When you have that much talent, is it hard to find the right five on the floor?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, we're pretty honest throughout the recruiting process. I mean, we don't tell anybody they're going to automatically start 'cause we don't know what that looks like when they make the transition from high school to college.

We choose people that want us. Like there's something about us that they like. That is the very thing that continues to drive them while they're with us. Like, if you're having a bad day, why did you decide to come here? It helps you get over your bad day a little bit easier, right?

We're just completely honest and we are look, sound, feel. Something looks, sounds or feels off, we're going to address it. If it looks, sounds, feels great, we're going to promote it. I believe we know what to say to our players that will allow them to grow. Yes, they may be angry one minute, but we get down to, Why? Why are you angry?



Then we talk about that, break it down. We do it time and time again.

We understand we're invested in them as whole people, not just the basketball part of it. That's the easy part. That's really the easy part of it.

But yes, it's hard to find a unit, it really is, who can finish it. Like, we just played Kentucky on Sunday and it was Pao, Lay, Tessa, Chloe and Feagin that finished the game. They played the entire fourth quarter. We sat out a senior on Senior Night, Breezy Hall. Does she feel a certain type of way? Yeah, she's a competitor. Senior Night, last regular-season game.

But you talk to her. You say, Hey, 90% of the time you've been in the game. That's been you, the unit. They understand when we have a unit out there that's playing well, we're going to continue to play until the cows come home.

It's just communication. If I don't say anything to Breezy, she might hold on to that for the rest of her life and remember that. When if you just address it, she can get it over with and finish the game today like she did for us.

**Q. Obviously MiLaysia comes off the bench. Energy from the very beginning. When she's playing like the way she played today, how important is that?**

DAWN STALEY: Which part? She had five turnovers, too.

I mean, MiLaysia is a talent, generational talent. When I say that she can do things on the basketball court that I haven't seen a female do, that's one. She consistently does it.

When she has got it going on, again, she pumps tempo. Her speed to me is her superpower. No one on the court can keep in front of her when she's got it going on.

When her three is falling, when she's able to just creatively put on display her talent, she gets a little, you know, hyper with it. She gets a little degree of difficulty when it's not called for. You got to give her that space to do that.

I just want to add sometimes, sometimes a simple pass will do in some instances. Sometimes like the behind-the-back pass, that was really the only pass, the only pass that she could deliver the ball. I know that because I've done plenty behind-the-back passes.

You put yourself in a position where the only thing you can do is dump it off to somebody in that way, she has that ability to do that. I'm glad that Sania Feagin made it,

because they probably would have been mad about it and let her know about it in the locker room (smiling).

She's a talent. I actually love being able to be on this journey with her because it's teaching her to understand, like, she's got an incredible hold on our team, and it can be good or it can be bad. She's got power in that. I want her to always understand that power. It can go either way.

So we're just trying to foster that, to only be good. That's a process for young people. It's a process for young talented people. Sometimes they don't get it. They see things that other players don't see. When you can't deliver like she delivers, you sometimes have an issue with that.

She sees things out there that no one else sees. So she's got to train people to play with her.

**Q. 58 points in the paint. How crucial was it for you to take high-percentage shots in game one?**

DAWN STALEY: It's key for us. It's key for us to do it at a high clip. You can get paint points, but if you're shooting them at a low percentage, you're not going to win basketball games. For us it is key, especially with a team like Vandy, who they are small. They're very talented, but they're small.

We wanted to make sure that we really attacked the paint through our bigs, through our penetration, because we felt like that would give us an edge.

**Q. You bring up an interesting point about keeping everybody happy, manage people and their thoughts. How much of your job is not necessarily X's and O's but being aware that you need to be thoughtful of this person, coach this person? That has to be exhausting.**

DAWN STALEY: Very much so. But you condition them. It's hard in the beginning to work through that because they don't quite understand what you're trying to do. They just think you're resisting whatever they want to do.

I'll say this. We have really good parents, really good parents. We have really good players that they allow us to invade that vulnerable space because they know, they see it. They've seen it over the years.

It's really cool. I'm attracted to that. I'm, like, drawn to that process of helping a young person just finding out who they are. Once they do, you know they're not going to be taken advantage of. I'm glad I get a chance to just kind of mold that at this stage of their lives.

**Q. You're 16-1 in the SEC tournament in Greenville.**

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### **What kind of advantage is that for you?**

DAWN STALEY: You bring that up. Now the coaches are going to want to move from Greenville (smiling).

I mean, we've had really good teams. Is it advantageous for us to be here in Greenville, South Carolina? Yes, it is. It is, because our fans come. They buy their tickets. They buy their tickets. It's not like we're giving tickets away. They buy the tickets in order for them to cheer on our team.

I know if I'm a coach, I would rather have a full gym, right? Even if we're in Austin, Texas. I'd rather have a full gym than have an empty gym. I think our game has grown to the point where Greenville has been a location that everybody can get to. The city's great. The arena's great. The people here are great.

I'm happy that we're hosting in South Carolina because now everybody else in the SEC sees what makes South Carolina great, and it's its people.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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