

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Florida Gators

Coach Kelly Rae Finley

Jeriah Warren

Ra Shaya Kyle

Postgame Press Conference

LSU 101, Florida 87

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Florida. We'll begin with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Obviously it was a big night for LSU on the boards, in the paint. Going up against as aggressive of an attack like that, what was that like for you?

JERIAH WARREN: Just stayed aggressive.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Helped her out. That's what a good teammate does.

I think our forwards anchored by Shay did the best job that they could. Aneesah Morrow is a very, very talented basketball player. But a lot of what she did was on the glass, but a lot of what she did was away from the basket tonight, which created a different challenge.

But I think Shay anchored our inside presence in the paint both offensively and defensively.

Q. Jeriah, even when you were facing a deficit, how were you trying to get the hot hand to keep you alive?

JERIAH WARREN: I think my teammate did a great job finding me. Everybody kept telling me to shoot the ball. I was doing that, staying aggressive. Shout-out to my teammates for finding me.

Q. Last year was a good run through the SEC tournament. This year equally as impressive. What were the last three days like and what are you taking



away from this?

JERIAH WARREN: We just spent a lot of time together as a team, the coaching staff, going on walks, making memories, having fun. Just enjoy the time because it goes by fast.

RA SHAYA KYLE: I would agree. Then like she said, spending a lot of time together, making sure we're connected so when we get on the court we're super connected with coaches, players. Yeah, that's it.

Q. What were halftime adjustments you made?

RA SHAYA KYLE: Y'all want to know the truth (smiling)?

No, but Kelly just came in, she wasn't too happy. We got off to a slow start. But we adjusted really well to the conversation that was had in the locker room. Just basically stay connected.

Fatigue obviously played a part towards the end. I'm proud of my team and coaches. We fought through the whole way.

Q. Looking back on your time at Florida, how have things gone, what do you take away from a great program?

RA SHAYA KYLE: I mean, I don't want to lie. Kelly, the coaching staff, they changed me totally game-wise, personality-wise, person off the court. I learned a lot.

But mostly I would say just, like, as a person for after. She's instilled a lot of just good things throughout. She's set me up really well for after. Really good coach. Love playing for her. Like I said, all-around person she's helped me.

JERIAH WARREN: I would say the same, just learning things you can take with you after the game. I wouldn't want to play for another coach. I love my time here, so yeah.



Q. Shay, last year you weren't able to take part in the tournament because of your injury. This time around you were one of the most important cogs. How much did it mean to you to be back out on the court?

RA SHAYA KYLE: It meant a lot to me. I just really wanted to be out on the court and do as much as I can at whatever they needed me to do. I worked really hard to get to where I am right now.

I would say, yeah, I just wanted to be out there and do anything I could for my team and my coaches.

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

Q. Last year you made a run to the quarterfinals. Were there any similarities in terms of this year's team? If so, any differences, as well?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: A lot of differences. This team went through a lot of changes early in the season. The season is long. I think we're about 16 weeks into the season, the last week of the regular season.

Each run, each team is special and unique to themselves. But this team, we lost 71% of our scoring from last season, we average eight points per game more our last six games, leaving out today. We've been a top 40 defense. Made a lot of progress from January to February. I've talked about that quite a bit. Then now into March.

It's disappointing to lose, but LSU is a very talented, very strong basketball team. I liked our fight, especially in the second half. Like Shay said, I wasn't extremely happy at halftime. I didn't think our connection was great. I thought we were playing a little hesitant. Hesitant doesn't look good on us, right?

We're the team that had nothing to lose and we needed to play like that. This team enjoys playing together. My hope is that we get invited to the WBIT. I don't know if it will happen. That's the reality of the sport. That's the reality of playing in the SEC.

But if we get the opportunity to, it's one that we would take gladly.

Q. With the season coming to a close, all the seniors, what have they meant to this program? What do you think their impact is on and off the court?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: They've meant a lot to our program. Their composure and poise and leadership that they've had throughout the course of the season, they all had to shift

their role a little bit to the right or to the left. They've all grown tremendously, like Shay talked about, both on and off the court.

As a coach, even in the day of NIL and the big business of sport and the Southeastern Conference, it's really what it's all about. Of course, we want to win more games. Of course, we're disappointed when we don't earn the win, right?

As young women, that class is exceptional. They'll go on to do wonderful, brilliant things. Paige Clausen already has a job in New York, big-time. She's finishing her master's and her undergrad in four years. Those are the things that people don't talk about so much anymore.

But I'm proud of the young women that I coach. I'm proud of their determination, their resiliency and their fight. I think that if the season was maybe three, four weeks longer, we could do some more big special things (smiling).

Unfortunately, that's not the case.

Q. Liv has been a very big name. What did it mean to see her perform at such a high level this last week?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: I've told Liv she's always earned everything that she's gotten. It's tremendous to see people on the outside recognize her. As a coach, you always want your student-athletes to be recognized with accolades and things that you feel like they've earned, right?

But at the same time you can't always control those things. So we talk about that a lot. You have to control what you can control, control your performance, control your production, what kind of teammate and person that you are, how you carry yourself.

She's just matured so much over the course of the season. Her floor game, I think you can see, if you saw from the start of the season till the end, it's because of her diligence and how she studies the game.

Her composure on the court was on full display last night. Her competitiveness. No different non-conference. Power Five conference, Top 10, No. 1 team in the country, it doesn't matter who we're playing, she's going to compete the same way night in and night out. That is huge for our team.

Q. Six players tonight in double figures, one being Alexia Gassett.

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Her jumper was falling. It's a beautiful thing. She has a great 15-foot jumper. Great

isolation from the high post. Obviously her defense is always spectacular.

Lex is a great team player, a fierce competitor. She's a coach's kid. She understands the game. She really just has all season continued to give us that spark, that spark, that energy, that oomph when it was needed.

I was really proud of her that five for seven from the floor, three for four from the free throw line. We beat Mississippi State a couple weeks ago. Talked about Jeriah's last-second shot, not to take away from her because we love that, too, but Lex hit two huge free throws. Without those free throws, we don't win that game.

It was great to see her find so much success this evening.

Q. Moving forward, you are losing some seniors, but also returning a lot of players. What are you looking to see from the freshmen, now sophomore group?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Oh, man, they're competitors. They're competitors who absolutely love the game. They're workers. They have the right mindset and mentality. They're very connected to each other. That's what it takes to build moving forward.

We've talked a lot about the foundation that's been laid from people who have played for us, alums, and this senior class this year. But the process is the process. Oftentimes we like to skip steps. If you're building things the way that we are through development, you can't skip steps unfortunately.

So the future is very, very bright for us. We're very excited to see them all on the court together. Kylee Kitts brings a different level of versatility. Her and Me'Arah, just with their skill set, their mentality, they're going to continue to become more and more physical, and their inside, outside presence. Their versatility will be key for us moving forward.

Q. What is your general takeaway from this tournament, this season, how you can keep building?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Rebounding really significantly improved from last season to this season. We were atrocious last year, let's be honest. Continuing to grow on the defensive end of the floor. We've always been able to score the ball fairly well.

Just continuing to build on that competitive mindset and the experience that's required in order to know what it takes to beat the best.

I think really as the course of the season went on, we started to really understand and value a possession. When the season began, we didn't understand the value of a possession, as silly as that sounds.

Something like last night, Eriny Kindred was able to dive on the floor for a loose ball at the top of the key. She played two minutes. We talked about it as a team today. If she doesn't do that, it's a run-out layup and we don't win that game. The value of a possession is very, very high.

Just carrying those things over to the next season, to the off-season and hopefully to the post-season.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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