

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 4, 2026  
Greenville, South Carolina, USA  
Bon Secours Wellness Arena

## Kentucky Wildcats Coach Kenny Brooks Clara Strack Jordan Obi

Postgame Press Conference

Kentucky-94, Arkansas-64

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Kenny Brooks and student-athletes Clara Strack and Jordan Obi. We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach Brooks and then take questions for student-athletes. We'll then take questions for Coach.

KENNY BROOKS: Very proud of our kids. It's a great opportunity for us to bounce back. Had an emotional game on Sunday. To be able to turn the page and understand what this is about in a relatively quick turnaround, I mean, we played on Sunday and then Monday we were flying down here. We were prepping all the while on the run.

They did a really good job locking in. Arkansas is a very difficult guard. Kelsi does a really good job with that group. They didn't win very many games in the league, but they fought all the way until the end, which was evident today. They were still playing until the final buzzer. So just watching her build her program, I have a lot of respect for her, her kids, the way they play. They play really hard.

Really proud of our kids, and celebrate it for about 10 minutes, 15 minutes, and then we'll turn the page and get ready for Georgia tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Congratulations. Double-doubles for both of you. Tournament time, the pressure ratchets up. How important was it for Meli and Asia to hit those threes initially, and how much did that calm your nerves?**



CLARA STRACK: Yeah, when they started the game, I think the pressure was really heavy on the inside, so those quick few threes and then they just kept it going throughout the whole game. That was super important.

They got us going. They got our energy going. They got us into a rhythm, so I think that's really important, yeah.

JORDAN OBI: Yeah, their ability to hit threes really opens up everything for offense. So when they're on, we're all on.

**Q. Jordan, you come in, and you hit that and-one to get the team going also. You had a little bit of a lull during the mid-season. What was it like to be able to battle back from that and start playing the way that you are playing right now?**

JORDAN OBI: Yeah, I think it just goes back to trusting the work that I put in. The season is full of highs and lows. Not getting too high, not getting too low. Trusting my teammates, trusting my coaches, trusting the work that I put in. You know, it will pay off eventually.

**Q. For both Clara and Jordan, a lot has been made about playing on these consecutive days. I know Coach has mentioned it on a couple of occasions. As a player, how much of that does that really factor into your mind, and what are you doing in order to kind of keep your legs fresh?**

CLARA STRACK: I mean, we're just taking it one game at a time, one quarter at a time, one possession at a time. Not looking too far into the future, because you got to win the one that's in front of you to make it those consecutive days. So, like I said, we're focusing on the next game.

Obviously we're going to rest in between as much as we can, but I think it's really just, like, a mentality, a mindset going into each and every game that you have to win this one in order to even worry about the next one.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. You can be dismissed. Questions for Coach Brooks.

**Q. With the back-to-back days and coming off that season finale, I wanted to ask about Tonie Morgan and just her leadership, especially at this point in the season, having come on to a team that was pretty established in terms of starting lineup?**

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, it's difficult. I think we look at these kids, and obviously it's a different landscape that we're in as far as the athletics, and we just look at Tonie Morgan and think that she's an experienced player, averaged 14 and whatever at Georgia Tech, and we're just going to plug and play.

But there's a human element to it. They come in, and Tonie is the type of personality where she's not going to be overbearing in any situation, so it's taken her a little bit of time to just get acclimated to her teammates. Not necessarily basketball-wise. She figured that out pretty quickly. But they do, they come in, and she never wanted to overstep her boundaries and try to be somebody that she wasn't. She just kind of blended.

We've been working on that as far as, like, her leadership skills and just understanding that she has more value to us than just the assist or the points, and we need her leadership. She's growing into that. I just wish I had her for more than one year so that I can develop it to a different level, but she's done a tremendous job.

It's not easy coming in and replacing an All-American, and she did a really good job and brought her own flair to the game, and she's made us equally as good.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Mitch Barnhart and just what your thoughts are with his announcement yesterday of possibly retiring?**

KENNY BROOKS: Obviously I can't sit here and say that I expected it, so I was a little bit shocked about the situation, but when you dive into it and you look at him and you look at everything that's going on, nothing surprises me anymore.

Mitch was the reason that I came here, and he's a big reason that I came here. I wanted to be under leadership that was going to lead into the future of college athletics, and obviously Mitch has done so much for college athletics throughout his tenure, not just the University of Kentucky.

It was an honor for me to be able to come here, and I learned so much from him in less than two years. You know, there's a part of me that feels devastated, because I just really -- I wanted to do ride off into the sunset with him and end my career under his leadership and what he was able to provide for not only the university, but also college

athletics in general.

Shocked a little bit. Saddened, but at the same time happy for him that he gets to go into a new chapter in his life. I know a lot can be made from it just looking at Mitch and his accomplishments and anything that he's done from the outside and tried to assess what he's done, but unless you're on the inside, you have no idea the value that that man brought to everyone.

I walked into this athletic program, and there's been nothing but welcoming hands, hugs, everything. I feel like it's family, and it's something that I was looking for when I came here, and I had it, and I got it, what he created here in his 24 years.

Happy for him. Super happy for him. To know him is to celebrate him. If you say anything differently, you just don't know the man, you don't know what he's done and how much he's accomplished in his tenure in athletics.

**Q. Arkansas really cut the lead down in that second quarter. It seemed like they were just a three-point basket from really making a game of it. How important was it for your team to really come out in the third quarter and just really extend that lead again?**

KENNY BROOKS: It was extremely important. I thought the first quarter, which was evident by the score, we did a really good job of guarding their dribble drive. Their dribble drive is a lot of one-on-one, stop-go, hesitate, try to get here. And they try to make the weak side fall asleep, and then they try to capitalize off of it.

We did a really good job in the first quarter of guarding it, not giving them those opportunities. We got in foul trouble in the second quarter, so I think Teonni sat most of the time, Asia Boone actually ended up getting her third foul. We gambled on that situation.

We got fatigued. We got fatigued, and we made -- we broke down. We had some breakdowns. Give them credit, they took advantage of them. Then we went back in, regrouped after halftime, and we were able to come back out.

Even though Asia had three fouls, we played that lineup that had played a lot together leading up to it. It was almost like bully ball. We just really willed our way and put the lead back because I thought we were just fresher.

**Q. Jordan Obi, talk about the importance of her play.**

KENNY BROOKS: I'm so proud of Jordan because she's the one that probably was affected the most this season

with the dysfunction, so to speak, of our lineup.

When she was in the game, in the starting lineup in the beginning, we were trying to find a way where can we put her because her and Teonni are very similar in the way that they play. It was working, and we were getting there, and we were getting a groove. Then Teonni gets hurt, and we put her back in her normal position.

Then she is starting to feel a groove there, and then Teonni comes back, and she has to re-learn that other position that she was playing.

She's done it. Obviously she's had some moments where she's been a little frustrated, but she's never let it affect her energy, her effort, her attitude. She's always been able to come out.

For her to have a game like this, no one is happier than me. Well, the whole group is happy for her because we know how much she's put into it and sacrificed. When she's playing like that, we're a really hard team to beat.

**Q. How happy were you with the defensive rebounding that you guys did? I think in the first half there wasn't even a second-chance point put in. Third quarter I think they got four baskets off of second chance.**

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, we're tall. You know, we're long, and that is our strength. Some people will use their strength as speed, the quickness. Our strength is length.

That kind of goes well when we're able to contest shots, block shots, but also rebound the basketball. We knew that was going to be a plus for us today and we had to take advantage of it.

It was a total effort. Just from everything, even the beginning of the game, we hit a couple of threes to really open up a lot of different things. It's kind of cool in a game like this where the storyline was kind of the game was within reach, victory was within reach.

It was a cool little story going on on the bench where I think Asia Boone broke the record, Ron Howard's record, of most three-pointers in a single season. She got in foul trouble, and then Meli tied it and broke it, broke that record. Then Asia came back and retied the record again.

A lot of movement going on there, but it was really good. Really good atmosphere. I will give credit to -- I think we played really well, but I thought the crowd was awesome. I don't know the words to the songs. I don't even know the songs that they were singing, but they were in sync. They

gave it atmosphere.

I didn't even know it was 11 o'clock. I didn't even know it was 11 o'clock in the morning. They were tremendous. They stayed engaged. They were really good. It was a lot of fun. I was just proud that I knew when Clara hit that turnaround shot while they were cheering for the 67 point, but the atmosphere was really cool and appreciative.

When I was at Virginia Tech, we had two players who came to a game like this. They would come to Greensboro. They were from Greensboro, and they would come to this game as the students and watching the game, and they were able to eventually play in the tournament and actually win the tournament. That was cool.

In that stands probably is a future SEC champion and somebody who is watching it and getting inspired by it. I don't like getting up this early and playing a game, but I thought that was a really good atmosphere, and somewhere in that stands there's a future SEC champion in there.

**Q. I know as a head coach it's game-to-game, but do you know who you play tomorrow? What can you really do to prepare for a team in that short of time?**

KENNY BROOKS: We know who we play, and we understand it, and we know the difficulties of being able to play. We're going to go in and Katie does a tremendous job with her group. They've had a phenomenal year with the additions that they had and putting everyone together.

We had to play them. We had to play them, and it was a very difficult situation last time. We were pretty much less than 48 hours off of an emotional loss at Tennessee, came back, had to play that game. We were not full strength, and I'm sure they weren't.

We didn't have Teonni Key in that game. If we probably had played that game, regularly Teonni would have been able to played that game, because she was able to come back the next game. Everything happens for a reason.

At this point Katie, she's going to be over there telling her kids that they have the advantage because they got an extra day of rest. We're going to go back and tell our kids that we have the advantage because we got the nerves out, we got the jitters out, we got to actually see it and feel it.

It's just going to be a test, a will of ways. At this point in the year that's all that it is, because everyone is tired, everyone is going in having different circumstances and just got to look and focus on what's the positive. Our positive is we

put up 94 points in that gym already in front of people. All right, let's go out and do it again.

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