

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Kenny Brooks

Clara Strack

Tonie Morgan

Postgame Press Conference

Kentucky 76, Georgia 61

THE MODERATOR: We'll begin with an opening statement for Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

KENNY BROOKS: I'm very proud of our kids. Obviously it's not easy to bounce back 24 hours later and play a basketball game. Even more so when you have to do it in the SEC. Every game is going to be a physical game. It's going to be a battle. We understand that.

Proud of our kids, the way that they just pushed through. They were very resilient. Things didn't always look great, but we pushed through. So very proud of them.

Congratulations to Georgia on a phenomenal year. Coach Abe is one of my favorites in this business. She just does things the right way. For them to have the year that they had after a not so great year last year, I think that's going to be a team that's going to make some noise in the NCAA Tournament.

Just proud of our kids, and obviously a lot of rest now and get ready for another battle tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: One note from today's game, Clara Strack's 33 points tied for the third most by a Kentucky player in an SEC tournament game, tied (indiscernible) Rhyne Howard in the 2021 tournament. With that, we will take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Clara, I think you had a career high in three-pointers made today with five. What was



working so well for you out on the perimeter?

CLARA STRACK: The first play of the game, I noticed they were really, like, in the paint on me, so I shot it. It went in, and I just kept shooting it. Coach Brooks has a lot of confidence in my three. He told me I was going to make five one day, so he was right.

Q. Tonie, your first experience at the SEC tournament. What's it been like two games in?

TONIE MORGAN: We're on a roll right now, so it's been fun. We've been playing with high energy, effort and attitude. So hopefully we can keep it going tomorrow.

Q. Tonie, a lot of your job is distributing the ball. If other players aren't hitting threes and Clara can step out there and hit five of them, what does that mean for you in doing your job?

TONIE MORGAN: Let's just say she makes my life a lot easier. She makes my job very easy.

I think everybody says it in the locker room. She's the best player -- best post player in the country. Playing with her, playing with my teammates, they make my job very easy, so I really appreciate them.

Q. You enjoyed yourself out there playing against your former teammate, and she's a tremendous player also. They were here in the other press conference. How much difference did you know playing in the ACC and now in the SEC?

TONIE MORGAN: I mean, both great leagues, but this league is really good. I mean, it's a good game every night. There's no nights off no matter who you play.

It's very aggressive. It's high-level basketball, and I'm just happy to be in this league, though.

Q. Clara, Coach Brooks has frequently talked about you as being one of the toughest players in the league. Typical physical game out there. How would you



define toughness?

CLARA STRACK: I mean, I think you just got to be ready. You know it's going to be physical, and I just think you can't shy away from physicality. You have to take it, and you have to give it back to them.

Then just being able to move on from that, like move on to the next play, move on to the next possession, really anything like that mentally tough, physically tough.

Q. 14 points, 7 assists, Tonie. A lot of smiles in 39 minutes. How are you feeling, and how much gas do you have left in the tank here?

TONIE MORGAN: I have a lot of gas. We have three more to go. A lot of gas left.

Q. Georgia was talking about how the last time you played them, you guys didn't have Teonni. What difference did she make today, and how does she change the dynamic of your team when she's out there on the floor?

CLARA STRACK: I think Teonni is obviously a super important part of our team. She had a double-double, 12 rebounds. That in itself, it just helps us so much. Her energy, her effort throughout the whole game. She always goes 100%. So I think that's something that we really missed without her, obviously.

Like I said, she's one of the most important pieces of our team. So, I mean, just having her presence on the court, even if it's not scoring or whatever, whatever she does, it's really important to have her.

Q. (Indiscernible) Coach Brooks goes on national TV and describes you as the worst superstar that he's ever coached. Tell us the background on that story and your rebuttal on that remark.

CLARA STRACK: I played terribly against Auburn. So I think I needed that. I've always responded best to harsh criticism, like tough love, anything like that.

I think I needed it. I always need something like that to get me going, I think, within this league. It's a long season. You'll have lulls, but I think you have to remember take it game by game. He was just trying to get me ready for the next game. There was no harsh feelings there. Maybe for a few minutes (laughter) until I remembered.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach.

Q. Kenny, I guess kind of on that same subject, you have special relationship with all your players. How do you know when to give that sort of tough love and you can give that harsh criticism to somebody and know that they'll respond in the right way? I mean, this response from Clara, 33 points and five three-pointers today, did you expect that?

KENNY BROOKS: I expect that from her each and every night. When I made that statement, it was when I was talking about it, it was in jest. Think about what I said. You don't coach that many superstars. So if you're not the best in whatever group of three, that's still pretty daggone good.

I can challenge Clara like that because I know Clara, okay? I know what Clara needs. Clara and I spend a lot of time together. I'm the one that watches film with her. I'm the one that does her workouts. She's best friends with my daughter, so she's at my house, so she sees me in a lot of different lights. She sees me as coach, but can also see me as dad.

We have a very good relationship, and so I know how to get her going. I know how to get her going. I'll be very honest. I can't do that with everyone, but that's just how special our relationship is, and I know it.

She played against Auburn, and I knew we were going down the stretch, and I knew I needed her to be locked in and focused. Not just the points, but Clara is developing into a leader. Knowing her and knowing just her personality, she's the type player that she does not want to disappoint me. Doesn't want to disappoint anyone.

So when I went in, I challenged her, and I challenged her harshly, and before we got to the plane, she had text me, can we watch film tomorrow, can we work out? Mission accomplished.

When we went to the workouts those next couple of days, man, she was locked in, and she was focused. I said, she's ready. Not ready for a particular game. Ready to finish the season the way that we needed her to finish.

I know we go through different stages with athletics and whatnot, but because I know her and because our relationship is so strong, I know what buttons to push with her. I knew she was going to respond. In return, it wasn't just for her. Her response really lit a fire up underneath the rest of the team, which I knew it was going to.

So she's a coach's dream because you can coach that way because she knows everything that I'm doing to her is for her, and it's going to come from a place of love. Before it's over with, she probably will be the best superstar that I

ever coached, but have you to get to these points to get her there. She's just not going to get it there by herself.

Q. There was a point in the fourth you guys had about two and a half minutes left. You had just -- I think you were up by 13. Your whole bench was on fire. I look at you. You're sitting at the table like this. Is there a point in this tournament or any game where you can relax?

KENNY BROOKS: No, no (smiling). It's natural, and every coach that you've talked to that's advanced in the tournament, at some point in the game you coach the game differently. You don't just coach for that moment. You don't just coach for that game. You're doing things because you know that you have to play -- you may have to play tomorrow.

So you're constantly -- if you watched me even closer during the time-outs, my assistants kept talking to me, and I was zoned out because I'm thinking about today, but I'm also thinking about tomorrow. I'm thinking about next week, because where we are as a team, this is the toughest league in the country, and we're going to fight tooth and nail every time we get out there.

But we're also trying to make ourselves great for the NCAA Tournament because we feel like this team right here -- we're not an 8 seed or 9 seed in this tournament. They're going to make us a 5 or a 6. We're going to be the best 5 or 6 seed in the history of 5 or 6 seeds.

That's what we're trying to continue to build upon so that we are really good, we feel really confident, and then when we get to tomorrow, we get to the next tournament, we're going to be very, very confident. So that's the way we're coaching right now.

Q. Obviously a different story with Clara hitting five threes today, but was there anything you saw on the scouting report that, hey, we want you to step out and shoot threes, or did this just happen?

KENNY BROOKS: You've been with us every day. I've been saying it the whole year. I said she's going to make four or five threes in a game this year. I shoot with her every day. We can't bet, but if we had to and I were to bet on somebody winning the shooting contest, it's her. She shoots it just as well as Amelia and Asia. It's just a matter of learning how to shoot them in a game.

Today will go a long way for that because if Clara Strack is stepping out and hitting threes like that, what the heck do you do? Because now she goes inside, it opens up for a lot of different people.

I've given her the green light all year long for moments like this and because I've seen her put the work in. If she puts the work in and I believe in it, and I'm going to say, okay, if it's there, take it.

Q. Often it's said the score is no indication of how the game was played. With three minutes to go in the third quarter, you went to a two-three zone, something that you recognized, changing the momentum, perhaps, at that time was something you had -- and obviously you did good. Obviously five threes doesn't hurt as far as that goes, but the game was a lot closer. Someone that's from the outside that just saw the score wouldn't realize how tough a game it was. You confirmed that.

KENNY BROOKS: Yes, it was a very tough basketball game. We're a predominantly man-to-man team. Ironically, when we had to play Georgia the last time out, it was a scheduling got all messed up. We had just come back from Tennessee. We got in the next day, and I was getting ready to watch film on the Tennessee game.

I got a call at 11:00 that said you're playing Georgia tomorrow. We had to play them on short notice, short rest. We didn't have Teonni Key at that time. We went to a two-three zone in that game, and it seemed to be effective a little bit.

But, also, to the point I mentioned earlier, when you get to conference play and you're playing on consecutive days, you got to pull out all stops and maybe do some things that you're not traditionally aligned to do. We like to play man-to-man, and we want to contest man-to-man, but in this particular moment we felt like we were going to play zone. I just didn't know when I was going to pull it out.

I felt like we got a little bit of a lead in that third quarter, and it worked. I think it really stifled them a little bit. They got a little stagnant, because they were causing us problems with the high-ball screen. We actually even changed coverages on it once or twice, but their guards were very elusive, got downhill, and created for themselves and for others.

We kept them at bay for a while when we went to the zone, and that just really clogged things up. We knew we were going to go to it. I just didn't know when, and that was a perfect time to do so.

Q. Something a little different today in the second quarter. Josie Gilvin got a six-minute run. I just want to ask you, was it something about Georgia? Is it something that Josie is doing here in the tournament?

KENNY BROOKS: I'm so proud of Josie. Obviously things haven't gone as well as maybe we had hoped or predicted, but her attitude has been tremendous throughout the whole season, regardless of when I put her in.

There's been a couple of games where I was a little hesitant, and maybe it was only a minute left, and I called her name, and she sprints up to the top with a great attitude. She comes into practice with a great attitude.

It's been a little bit of an adjustment for her to try to figure out our schemes and what we're trying to do, but she never stopped. Her attitude has been tremendous. Josie earned those minutes today because of what she did yesterday and what she had done a couple of days before in practice.

She played 11 minutes yesterday against Arkansas, and she was very effective. She's a team favorite. Kids love her. They cheer for her. They root for her.

I anticipate especially when you are trying to broaden your rotations, you know, I think she's going to be a part of it. I think she's going to be a part of it throughout tomorrow, NCAA Tournament, and I think she's going to add some value to us.

I thought she did a really good job today of just really giving us a different look, hounding their guards, and making it a little bit more difficult for them.

Q. Teonni and Clara combined for 28 of your first 29 points. What allowed them to get off to such a hot start, and what does it do for the rest of the team when they're playing like that?

KENNY BROOKS: They're good in everything. I looked at those two before the season started, and I told them they could be the best front court tandem in the country. We got off to a little bit of a slow start. Teonni had a procedure. She had aches and pain with her lower extremities. We knew she was going to have a procedure done that was going to sideline her for a couple of days. She came back from that. We went to LSU. We were still playing terrific.

Then when she went out, it changed the whole dynamic of our team. A lot of people -- like, that's why we are here right now as a 9 seed because we had to play six games without -- you hear Clara describe her, she's everything to us. She allows us to have five more fouls. She allows us to be extremely long. She allows us to rebound exceptionally well.

Then she can score to it. It's a dynamic that not most people have seen. It makes us one of the tallest teams in

the country. So when she's out there and she's doing things and she's helping clean up some defensive mistakes and she's grabbing rebounds, we're a very tough team to beat. And that's why I think we're going to be positioned very well as we head into the NCAA Tournament.

But when she's playing like that, when she's doing this, we're really good. Because we played Arkansas, and I saw Clara score 33 and Teonni had 17 and 12. We go to Louisville and beat them and they both had a double-double. We go to LSU, they both have a double-double.

When they're playing like that and Amelia is hitting shots and Jordan bringing some energy, we're a really good basketball team. And I know that they don't have us as one of the top 16 teams in the reveal, but we're one of those teams. We're one of those teams.

We played six games against teams that have been ranked in the top 5 at some point in time, and you could throw eight if you add in Louisville, who was a 6 one time, and Maryland was at 6. Our schedule is tough, and I think we're going to be battle-tested because of it.

Q. Kenny, your ten minutes of celebration are up. It's time to turn the page. Tomorrow is South Carolina. The building is going to be crazy. They're going to have a lot of fans here. Also, they're good. What are your thoughts on the Gamecocks?

KENNY BROOKS: We're going to lace them up. According to a million people, we got nothing to lose, right? So we'll just come out there and just be ready to play.

This will be a great opportunity for us. We played them. We played them very well on Sunday. Played them very well on Sunday. We get another opportunity.

It is a little bit different. I'm not going to sit here and say it's not. We've had two games already. This is our third game, and they haven't played since we played them on Sunday. So obviously you're going to have a competitive disadvantage because of that, but nonetheless, we're going to go out here and use it as an opportunity to get better, because we're looking forward to playing a lot of basketball for the rest of the season.

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