

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 6, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Kenny Brooks

Teonni Key

Clara Strack

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 87, Kentucky 64

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Kentucky head coach Kenny Brooks and student-athletes Teonni Key and Clara Strack. We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach.

KENNY BROOKS: When you spend a lot of time with each other, there's a lot of different, I don't know, just feelings, emotions, everything that goes along. And sometimes after a win you can feel like you just didn't give it your all. You are a little disappointed because you're trying to get to an end result that you know you're capable of.

And then sometimes you don't play as well and you don't win a basketball game, but you're super proud of your kids. This is one of those moments. And I am so proud of their effort, not only today, but the last three days, and we're going to continue that. We're going to build off of that.

That's exactly what we wanted from this experience right here. I think we're going to be a team that's going to be able to play a lot of basketball here in the next couple of weeks. So very, very proud of my kids.

Q. Just talk about the challenge that South Carolina has for you guys on the inside, you're both the posts, so just talk about that challenge from South Carolina today?

TEONNI KEY: Yeah, they have good posts. I think obviously we've played two games before. So they've had the time to look and scout and stuff like that and help in.

Yeah, they're good players, but we're good players, too.

CLARA STRACK: Yeah, I mean, just going off what Te said, they're obviously great inside. They're a big team. They're long. We're long, too, but it presents its challenges. But I think we just have to work around those, and we learn from this game. We got better this game. And I think it will help us as we go to the tournament.

Q. Teonni, South Carolina is obviously one of the best teams in the country. Coach Brooks talks continuously about getting better. What do you think you personally need to do in order to get better so that the team can make a deep run in the NCAA Tournament?

TEONNI KEY: I mean, personally, I think, I need to just all around get better, just help this team do whatever it takes for us to win and make a deep run. I think obviously being more efficient from the floor, defensively, being better in that aspect as well.

I think with this time we had before the tournament, I think getting better in every area is honestly the main focus.

Q. How much of this game was more so just fatigue, playing your third game in the last three days? You saw this team on Sunday. Where would you say that you saw -- I guess where you guys saw the game slipping a little bit?

CLARA STRACK: Yeah, I mean, like you said, we played two games this past two days. But I don't think we want to make excuses for ourselves.

Obviously we're tired. Obviously we're fatigued, but I think we have to fight through that. I think we have to clean up the little things. We had turnovers. We didn't execute on defense as well as we would have liked to.

But, like I said, I don't think we want to make excuses that we were tired.



Q. Girls, the one thing left, the March Madness and the NCAA Tournament, what do you expect to see from your team going forward in March Madness?

CLARA STRACK: I think we got better here today, like we've said. So I think continuing to build off of what we've been doing these past few days here at the tournament, our games throughout the whole season, just continue to build off that, being able to execute, everything like that.

I think the SEC and this tournament has really prepared us a lot for like March and March Madness and what we're going to do there. So I'm just excited. I'm excited to go on a run with this team.

Q. Even though you guys were down a lot pretty early, it seemed like you were still playing hard. When you see the other team make big runs like that, what's the real, real key emotionally to kind of stay locked in?

TEONNI KEY: Yeah, I think the biggest key is, honestly, we kept preaching to ourselves we've got to stay together. We've got to play our basketball and control what we can control and get better. I mean, that's the biggest focus for us moving forward in March, make a deep run. We've just got to, you know, clean up some of the little stuff and get better each game.

Q. Clara, you had such a breakout game yesterday, and then today, South Carolina kept you in check a little bit more. What do you think they were doing differently, and what can you learn from that so that you can also continue to improve in the tournament coming up?

CLARA STRACK: Yeah, I mean, every game is different. Every game they're going to guard us differently. They're going to take different things away. I'm willing to do whatever it takes for my team to win, if that's scoring 30 points or that's scoring 0 points but rebounding and playing hard on defense. I'm willing to do that.

I don't really look at the stat sheet and judge myself on that. I judge myself based on the effort I give to the game and how much I'm able to lead this team and help this team get to win.

Q. Coach, congratulations on the first two wins there. Do you feel like you've done enough to get one of those top 16 and to host? What do you think there?

KENNY BROOKS: I honestly don't care. We'll go anywhere and play. As long as we get an opportunity.

What we wanted out of this the last couple of days was to

make sure that we got better as a basketball team and to make sure we came out of this thing healthy. And that was mission accomplished.

And we want to host. We want to host. We feel like we deserve to host. But we're not putting all our eggs in a basket, emotionally, to try to figure out and to say if we're going to host or not, and if we don't get it then we're going to be upset. We're not. We'll go anywhere and play anybody. That's how much confidence we have in each other.

So we'll sit back this week and we'll rest and we'll fine-tune some things. And then we'll get ready for wherever we're playing.

Q. It's been a tough week, four games in, I think, six days, twice against South Carolina. What have you learned this week that you're going to take with you --

KENNY BROOKS: I love my kids. We had a really good week. We had a really good week. I'm not talking about whether we won a game or lost a game. We did a lot of things this week that a coach will look at and he'll see or she'll see, and we grew. We grew.

We have some areas, you know, mentally that we needed to improve on, and we needed to play with a little bit more joy. We needed to do a lot of different things, and we did that. I was very proud of our kids.

As I sit up here and talk to you guys, you know, I knew this team had so much potential, but we were missing an element. And I think that we found it. And they're playing with joy. They love each other. They love playing with each other. They're connected now, and we're going to keep that, fine tune it and then see what happens in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. You've gone on record as saying officially how much you love this SEC Tournament. What have you really learned from this experience, and what are some of the specific improvements that your team took this week?

KENNY BROOKS: You are being facetious, right? That wasn't -- I don't think I've ever said that I love this SEC Tournament. It's taxing. It's very taxing.

You go through a grueling 16-game schedule, and to nobody's fault but our own, we put ourselves in a situation where we had to play five games to get to the prize.

Today, I had championship-day fatigue. What I mean by that is usually for you to get to the championship game,



you've had two grueling games, and then you play a championship game. This is our third game.

And for us to have to come out and you play -- and that's why I'm so proud of my kids, man; they did not stop fighting. And they were tired. They were -- I take that back. They were exhausted. They were exhausted.

And from part of my responsibility and my contract says that I have to win basketball games. But part of my responsibility is to take care of them and make sure that they don't hurt themselves, and today they were fatigued. They were very tired.

And then you come -- and we're not there yet. We're not there yet to challenge for an SEC championship. We're going to continue to get better to where we can. But I'll tell you what, I know Vic is probably a little upset and Kim's probably a little upset. That's just a home game for South Carolina.

And it's hard enough to do it, to play against a really good basketball team. And we're not there yet. So don't get me wrong. I'm not whining for us. But we've got great teams in this conference, great teams in this conference.

It's taxing, it's hard. I am elated right now that we're walking out of here healthy and so that we can go out and we can prepare, and I think we have a chance to make a really long run in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Coach, talk about the confidence that Amelia has playing with and shooting with right now?

KENNY BROOKS: I'm very proud of her. Everybody knows she's a 3-point shooter. And she finds her way. She does so many things for us other than just the 3-point shooting. She's a wonderful kid, and she really helps us get going.

And it's been a joy to coach her for these past two years. We've asked her to do things that she's never been comfortable doing. She's a stretch 4 by nature. And we've got her playing the 2 guard. And she's never complained. She goes out. She guards the best player on the other team. Sometimes she's successful. Sometimes she's not. But she's always going to give her best effort. And when you have kids like that, you can do a lot of different things, and it makes it a joy to be a coach.

Q. You challenged Clara before this tournament. Obviously you don't get the win today. She mentioned just a few minutes ago about in terms of she doesn't necessarily look at the stat sheet, but how would you assess her game today?

KENNY BROOKS: She was tired. She was exhausted. Her opponent was sitting at home while she was playing 75 minutes. And, again, that's on us. We put ourselves in that predicament where we had to be the No. 9 seed and we had to play for five games.

But that kid goes out and she plays to her fullest every second that she's on the floor. I saw it very early, that she had that look on her face that she was trying to push through something that she probably couldn't push through.

And it was my responsibility to make sure I didn't put her in a bad situation, because she would have tried to get every loose ball, every rebound, try to get it.

I thought she played a little straight up today. They were able to push her off her mark a little bit. She was tired, extremely tired.

So, she's a warrior. She is. She makes us go. And I wouldn't trade her for anybody in the country because she epitomizes everything that I want in a student-athlete and a student-athlete at the University of Kentucky.

Q. Sticking with Clara, you've talked about challenging her, about building up her confidence. Today's result, notwithstanding, what do you think it means to her heading into the tournament having those two big games?

KENNY BROOKS: No, today withstanding, because she did so much for our kids. She was not going to stop. It didn't matter. It didn't matter that she was playing against somebody that was fresher. It didn't matter there was two people on her. She was still going to play hard.

She mentioned it, whether she's scoring a point or not scoring a point, she's going to try to do whatever she can to help us win. So you can include this game just as valuable as the ones she played, the two before that, because that is the epitome of what we want to be, even if things aren't going spectacular for her, you can still do other things. She's the ultimate. Like I said before, and I'll say it a million times, I wouldn't trade her for anyone.

Q. Fatigue notwithstanding, and when you looked at this game at South Carolina, what stands out when you're trying to prepare for them? What is the toughest thing to prepare for them as you're going in?

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, this league is very good. So every time you prepare for any team in this league, you can play one night and you've got to cover Blakes, and

then you look at the score sheet and the next game, who is your opponent the next game, and you've got to look, and it might be Madison Booker. And it can be a lot of different players, you've got to play Blakes again. You've just got to go and be ready, prepared, because this is the best conference in the country.

It's a privilege to be able to play in this conference. It's a privilege to be able to compete in this conference. So every night, you know you're going to get someone's best shot, but every night you know you'll play against great players.

I started off my career at a mid-major, James Madison, and I remember we just had to play against one player on the opposing team who we had to worry about. It might have been Elena Delle Donne, but you could put three people on her you didn't have to worry about the other players.

You come to the SEC and everybody's good. It's a notch below the WNBA. It's a privilege to be able to compete in this league and it's a privilege to be able to go against such great players.

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