

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Dawn Staley

Raven Johnson

Ta'Niya Latson

Postgame Press Conference



play in an SEC championship game, what does it mean when you get into the point of the game where you're able to lock in and lead this team to a victory? That's the first part of the question. Ta'Niya, what's it like seeing Raven orchestrate and put people in place to basically be where they need to be.

RAVEN JOHNSON: I say I've been doing this. I just added a little bit more to my game, which is scoring. And I think that started in the summer. This is going off from last season, I didn't like the way I played and approached the game. I think I approach the game a little different, and I'm seeing what I put in, the work. That's what Coach always tell me. You want to produce, you got to put in the work. I did that over the summer.

TA'NIYA LATSON: Yeah, that's just what Raven does. She's a floor general, PG 1, best point guard in the country. She's a winner. That's just what she does.

Q. Raven, if my math is correct, after this game, you're shooting 40 percent from 3 on the season. Is there anything you felt you did over the off-season, throughout the season to improve that efficiency?

RAVEN JOHNSON: Coach said something about -- okay, we had the Atlanta Dream coach to come to some practice, and she was telling us about percentage and shooting. She said something about the one shot you take, something -- what was it? Help me. Please.

DAWN STALEY: The Atlanta Dream's coach, Karl, is really into analytics. He said if you can get 1 percent better, if you can make one more 3 in 25 attempts, you're going to increase your shooting percentage.

Because I asked him, I said, okay, can you give me some tips about shooting that I can share with my team? He gave me that, and then he said if you can get your team to shoot within this space here, like everything's here, not out here, not out, within this space, you're going to get better. But you got to, obviously, put the work in, and you've got to really pay attention to your mechanics.

South Carolina 83, LSU 77

THE MODERATOR: Joined by South Carolina head coach Dawn Staley and student-athletes Raven Johnson and Ta'Niya Latson. We'll begin with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Raven, you had a career night tonight, obviously. You guys needed a comeback in the second half to get it done. What does it mean to you to be able to lift this team, carry them on your shoulders, and get this win tonight?

RAVEN JOHNSON: It means a lot, honestly. I'm thinking about winning. Whatever it takes to win. If I got to defend, if I got to score, whatever it takes. If I've got to rebound, that's what I'll do. I'm just thinking about winning.

Q. Ta'Niya, obviously, you've known Raven for a long time. Know the kind of scorer she's been. To see her step into that role where she puts the team on her back at times and hits those big buckets, what's it been like to see her take on that role this season?

TA'NIYA LATSON: That's Raven Johnson. It's been a long time coming. She's been doing what I been knowing she can do. To see her flourish means a lot. I came here to win games, and Raven's a winner. That's just what she does. So I'm super proud of her, and I'm happy to see her flourish.

Q. Ladies, congrats on the win. Raven, this is your last SEC Tournament. Seeing how you guys are able to come out and get a win, more so getting a chance to



I shared it with our team and really didn't think Raven was listening.

RAVEN JOHNSON: I was listening.

Q. Raven, the other month, I'd asked you about seeing Texas (indiscernible) times. It seems like you've seen LSU just as many times. What's it like knowing no matter how intense the battle, you've always won?

RAVEN JOHNSON: Honestly, LSU is a really good team. We knew we had to compete and bring our A game. We had to play for 40 minutes. Every possession mattered. I think we had to lean on each other through the good and bad. I think we did a good job of that, executing the Xs and Os. Every time we go against LSU, we know it's going to be a battle. We want to end out on top, and that's what we did.

Q. Raven, you just mentioned you didn't really like your approach to the game last year. Just what did you not like about it? What did you want to fix?

RAVEN JOHNSON: Just go look on Twitter. Go look on Twitter. It tells you everything.

DAWN STALEY: Raven wanted to fix her production. She wanted to produce more. In stats in which we all -- not we. You know, the basketball think tankers, right, they want to see her score, right? They want to see her. She's already play making. She did all the things that contribute to winning besides scoring. And young people are really -- are almost actually bullied on social media to getting better.

If you don't have your head on straight and you don't have people who support you to say -- to tell you your worth, you'll let strangers dictate who you are and how you feel each and every day.

So Raven blocked out the noise, put her head down, and went to work. And now you're seeing the results of her work. It's that simple. It's that simple. Put your head down and get to work. And then law of averages say you're going to come out on top if you put the work in.

And you can't just put the work in in the summer. You have to maintenance it. After every practice or before practice, she gets her shots in. Our guards get their shots in. So it's times like these where they leave her open, she's unafraid to take that shot.

Three years ago, last year, she would have never shot six 3s. Ever. Even if she was open. Even if she felt good about it. But game winner. Game-winning plays.

Q. Raven, besides whatever outside noise to score more, when you were looking at your team going into the season, when Chloe went down and all the new faces and the role that you felt like you would have to take on for this team, was that kind of like that conscious, hey, this is what I'm going to need to do, scoring-wise, for our team to be successful? What was your kind of, I guess, mentality going into the season from that respect?

RAVEN JOHNSON: Even if Chloe was there, I feel like I'm going to be the same person, what I'm doing today. I think Chloe would have added more boost in what she brings to the table. But seeing them go down, you know, it's God's plan. Everything happens for a reason. Coach always say next man up.

I think you know that's what our team is doing. Next man up. When your number's called, be ready. Be ready to produce. It starts with her, like y'all don't know the real her. Let me tell y'all that. She gets in on this. She's a winner too.

DAWN STALEY: Cut the mic. Please.

RAVEN JOHNSON: I'm trying to give you some good stuff.

Q. Question for both players. Madina struggled from the field and then had a few big buckets in the fourth quarter. What was it like for you to see her stick with it and come through in the fourth quarter?

TA'NIYA LATSON: She showed up big at the end with that bucket. Even though she made a couple mistakes and she didn't get what she wanted at the basket today, Madina flipped the page instantly. She gave us a lot of boards, 13 rebounds. She was effective on both end of the floor.

I'm just proud of her.

Q. Ta'Niya, you finished with 19 points. First SEC Tournament. Different experience, obviously, from the ACC. What have you learned about yourself to this point?

TA'NIYA LATSON: Probably my patience and resilience. I mean, I've been real patient this year. I mean, I came here to play with other great players. Playing with a point guard like Raven just making myself better and coming to play under Coach Staley, just to be a better two-way player. I want to improve my defense and be more than a scorer. I want to facilitate, play make. I feel like I've been able to do that.

Just letting the game come to me, not forcing anything.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you very much.

Questions for Coach.

Q. Dawn, congratulations on the win. I want to ask you about the last minute. You go up 5 with 45 seconds left. I mean, you've got the ball with 45 seconds left and they didn't foul. A lot of teams might panic and turn the ball over thinking they're going to get fouled. Took composure on your part. Were you surprised they didn't foul, and can you talk about the sequence?

DAWN STALEY: I think they had two fouls to give as well. We thought they were going to foul us. When they didn't, I thought we handled that part. I had to call a time-out because we got stuck in the corner.

Called the time-out, and then Madina did her heroics. So a little bit surprised by it, but the way that they were shooting the 3, maybe they would get the possession back and bang another 3. I think they had seven 3s on us. So they were probably trying to play the long game a little bit.

For us, the more and more time the clock ticked down, it favored us. So I was in favor of them playing it that way.

Q. Dawn, I think it was the first time you trailed at halftime since Texas. Just what was your message to the team at halftime and was it good to be in a game like this where you were challenged and needed to come back in terms of getting ready for the tournament, the NCAA Tournament?

DAWN STALEY: At halftime, I thought we should be down by 10, 12 points the way we were playing. We didn't have Madina for a long stretch of that. And she's a big part of what we do.

Joyce picked up an early foul. So we kind of had to sit back in the zone a little bit and just save and protect them from picking up another foul. I just thought we just held on until we could get to halftime, talk about things.

I felt good. I felt our players were right there. When we came out in the third quarter, we made a run, took the lead. Then it was back and forth. But I thought our kids were really resilient.

Do I want the game to be played that tightly and exhausting our players on a semifinals night? No. Because those two teams that are about to play, I hope they're in the same situation. I hope they go in double and triple overtime.

But you have to do what you have to do to win and advance. And our players did that.

Q. You talked about Raven a little bit already. For a player to come back and have these goals and no matter how much you want it, it doesn't always play out like this. What about her has allowed these things to come to fruition? Scoring career highs against LSU twice, where they're two of your tightest games of the season.

DAWN STALEY: I would say this. The year that we lost in the '23 Final Four, I mean, it was an embarrassing moment because Caitlin Clark did the wave, and a lot of people don't know, Raven was 2 for 4 in that particular game, shooting extremely well from outside the 3. They can take that as something to pound on.

So we won the championship that following year. Raven went to work in the gym like she did. She went to work in the gym. She probably relied heavily on Kamilla and that group of players that we had together to win a National Championship, but she did. She put the work in.

Her percentages were pretty good, pretty solid. And then after that year, she got happy. She got happy. She didn't put the work in. She did not put the work in and she knew it. I had to remind her during that year, you didn't put the work in. You can't get it back now so you just have to suffer through this year and figure out how we can continue to win and you continue to make plays when it's there. But after the season, you have to really put the work in.

And she's seasoned. She's a veteran at this. So she really understands, this is her fifth year doing this. I mean, she's played at a high level. She's been to Final Fours every year of her career, except COVID year. Every year. I think she's really understanding where she can really benefit from being a scoring threat out there.

Q. You've talked a lot about standards in your program. In a game where every mistake is magnified, what separates teams that want to be the best from teams that prove they're the best?

DAWN STALEY: It's about habits. We always try to mention to our players, bring your practice habits to the game. Now, you got to have some pretty good practice habits because you'll bring the bad habits to the game as well.

We always talk about that. That is not just basketball. That's mentality, that's culture. That's being a good teammate. That's respecting the game and approaching it

that way. We've had enough leadership in the locker room to understand that and to bring that.

If someone else deviates from that, they look and feel out of place. That's what the standard is. That's what the culture that we try to create at South Carolina. And fortunately, for us, it's producing a lot of winning.

Q. MiLaysia has always played well in this tournament. What did you see from her today that allowed her to be so successful?

DAWN STALEY: I knew she was going to have a good game. After the first time we played them, I mean, I still think MiLaysia is a generational talent. She does things out there on the floor that I haven't seen a whole lot of female basketball players do.

I'm generally happy for her. Like, I'm super happy. She's actually doing some of the things that we talked about her doing. Just direct line drives and making plays. We all know she can play. We all know that she undoubtedly is a tremendous player.

She's also a junior now so some of the things that she's doing now, you just do because you're more seasoned doing it. But I'm happy for her. Like I'm really happy for her. She played two years for us, and we're always going to be happy. We always consider her a Gamecock, no matter what uniform she puts on.

Q. You're playing for another SEC championship. I think a lot of people maybe take it for granted a little bit, the difficulty of getting to this point, considering the conference, who you guys are, and the expectation level.

Can you just kind of put into context being able to get back there and play for another championship in this season with the depth of the conference and who you've had to go through?

DAWN STALEY: Some coaches may say and the location, right? I mean, this is a hard league. When we came to the SEC 18 years ago, coached in the A-10 for eight years, we came here for just this, to play against the best, to coach against the best, to try to outfox the other coaches down the sideline.

I didn't think it was going to be this hard. Because it's incredibly hard. It's not for the faint at heart. But to do it in the fashion that we've done it, you got to give it up to our players. In this climate, especially, we don't have a brand of basketball that, to me, if you're not really a basketball enthusiast, if you're not willing to sacrifice and hear the

hard truths, that's not popular. It's not popular.

Well, our players are conditioned to hear the truth. If you suck, we're gonna say you suck. But here's how you don't suck, right? We don't say it like that. We don't really say it like that, but we've got good parents who we work, we work together for our principal. And the principal is our players. The principal is their daughters. We all want them to be successful. How they go about doing that varies.

Some people have to get in the gym. Some people have to get out of the gym because they're so obsessive with it. We have to figure out what fits best for each and every player. We have those conversations, and they believe in it.

We may have transfers. They still believe in it, but they choose to go elsewhere for a change of pace, for more playing time, for whatever it is. I get it. But I know the players that we coach are better human beings, are better basketball players, are better sisters, are better daughters because of the experience that they have at South Carolina.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time. Congratulations on the win today.

DAWN STALEY: Thank you so much.

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