

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 8, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Dawn Staley

Maddy McDaniel

Joyce Edwards

Postgame Press Conference



JOYCE EDWARDS: Just pushing through mentally and physically. Obviously, three games in three days is tough. We can't let that stop us. The tournament is going to be just as brutal, just as hard. We get a little bit more rest, but we can't let the tiredness and fatigue get to us.

Q. Maddy, another strong game from you off the bench. What were you seeing out there? Did you feel any extra, I guess, pressure to go out and say I've got to get something done?

MADDY McDANIEL: I mean, the way the game started wasn't in our favor. So going out there, I was just trying to turn the page and get us going in some way.

Q. Maddy, just from your perspective, starting on the bench, the start to the game, was there anything that stuck out to you when you were watching the team about why you guys got off to that start?

MADDY McDANIEL: It wasn't really Texas. It was just us not executing and playing the way we usually play. That's all it was.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you very much. Appreciate your time.

We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. Dawn, I know you don't like to call them, but when they're on that run, 8-0, any thought of trying to call a time-out right there?

DAWN STALEY: No. If I did, I would have called a time-out. Just like let our players play through it a little bit. I don't usually do it. See if we could gather ourselves and make a play on both sides of the basketball. We couldn't do it.

Q. What do you attribute that start to for Texas? Was it more them making plays or y'all making mistakes?

DAWN STALEY: A little bit of both. I think they made plays. They forced us to play a certain way. Turning the

Texas 78, South Carolina 61

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by South Carolina head coach Dawn Staley and student-athletes Maddy McDaniel and Joyce Edwards. We'll begin with questions for the student-athletes and then questions for Coach.

Q. Joyce, this Texas -- I know it's not a strange thing, but just how physical and how difficult was it to try to get something going against their defense in the paint?

JOYCE EDWARDS: You know, Texas is known for their defense. Shoot, the SEC defense in general is way more physical than any other conference. We just got there, tried to execute. We didn't win.

Q. Joyce, from your perspective, what happened those first three minutes of the game?

JOYCE EDWARDS: It was bad. It was bad on all the starters. We're supposed to set the tone out there, and we definitely didn't do that.

But it happens. Throughout the whole game, the shots weren't necessarily falling. Things we usually make weren't necessarily going in. It just happens. We have other goals in mind. National Championship. This isn't the end all be all, so we're just moving forward.

Q. Joyce, as a follow-up to that, just what can you guys take away from this to be able to get to those goals that you have for the end of the year?

ball over isn't something that you can start a game like Texas and give them a head start, give them a 12-point lead.

We just -- it didn't feel right, just from a mental and physical standpoint. You can try to keep pushing through, but every time that we would try to make a run, we had just mental lapses, like uncharacteristic turnovers.

Some of it was us, some of it was Texas. They took advantage of it every single time, no matter who caused it.

Q. I think this is the highest any team has shot against you percentage-wise this season. Obviously, some of the turnovers led to that. But felt like Texas was really able to get to the midrange. What stood out to you defensively today that your team didn't play well enough?

DAWN STALEY: We just didn't play well. I mean, they were moving pretty fast, and we weren't moving as quickly as they were. When you think about it, maybe there's a little fatigue. We've had depth when we got to this point, played our starters some heavy minutes.

So you got to look at that and maybe think that contributed to it. A little mental fatigue, physical fatigue. But when you're not hitting on all cylinders, like Texas, you're going to feel it in every category.

Q. Dawn, just what was the message to the team afterward to take lessons from this as you regroup and head into the tournament?

DAWN STALEY: Our team knows we didn't play our best basketball. Not nearly what we're capable of doing. Told them that the last time we lost in this situation, we won a National Championship. So you've got to think about that. It might be the very thing this team needs. It's not what I would think yesterday, coming in today. But now that we're here and it's a reality, you search for things that have a connection that can give your team what it needs to make this run for a National Championship. I do think we have enough in the room to do that.

We'll rest and recoup at the end of the week and start that journey.

Q. Dawn, I believe the kids are on spring break coming up this week. What is the schedule getting back?

DAWN STALEY: We'll get back at the end of the week, probably Friday. Practice Friday. Take four days off.

Q. You've worked Alicia into the rotation quite a bit

since she got here. 19 minutes off the bench, she had some really solid minutes. What led to her playing time today, and what did you like from her?

DAWN STALEY: I told our team I thought we got stronger if we could get Ali to play the way she did. She played inspired. Not playing yesterday makes her think about the things she needs to do to play. If she can give us that, if she can give us that, she's got seven rebounds on a great rebounding team like Texas. She held her own defensively. So it was pretty good and promising to know that.

We needed scoring. We know Ali can score the basketball. I thought she did a pretty good job. I think we should probably have gotten her the ball a little bit more in the block and let her go to work. But we made a step forward in our journey to win a National Championship. Somebody like her will add to the depth that we need to make this run.

Q. Dawn, I wanted to ask you about Texas. What was the biggest thing that you saw in Madison Booker's growth this season? She looked comfortable all tournament, really. What did you see from her this whole tournament?

DAWN STALEY: She played like Maddie Booker. She's a junior. Juniors have it all together. They know where their spots are. They know how to lead. They know everything that has happened to them over the first two years of their career. They know where the pitfalls are, and they avoid them.

She's done extremely well. When her shot is going like that, they are a real difficult team to beat.

Q. Dawn, sort of a quiet game for Ta'Niya. What do you think Texas was doing to slow her down?

DAWN STALEY: I think we were just playing an uphill battle. We had to run some offenses that would give us multiple looks. I mean, usually, we give her -- we use her a little bit more than we used her. And we expended a lot of energy on defense so it was hard. And they made it difficult for wing entries.

So when it's like that, it's a lot of dribble entries and you have to run your sets from places that -- options that you only created one option, and that was a dribble entry. When it's like that, your offensive package shrinks.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Coach.

DAWN STALEY: Thank you so much.



