

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 8, 2026

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Texas Longhorns

Coach Vic Schaefer

Madison Booker

Rori Harmon

Justice Carlton

Postgame Press Conference

Texas 78, South Carolina 61

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the SEC tournament champion Texas Longhorns, head coach Vic Schaefer and student-athletes Rori Harmon, and Justin Carlton, and tournament MVP Madison Booker.

We'll take questions for the student-athletes and then questions for Coach.

VIC SCHAEFER: Okay. First, I can't be more proud of a group of young ladies of a team. To do what they did today in the way they do in this environment and this arena, against that team, is truly impressive for me to sit there and just watch it. That first half, to see them come out the way they did in the opening quarter, they were laser focused.

I kind of thought it started back when we left on Wednesday, I just thought my -- I had some kids that were kind of here on a mission. Sometimes what you don't know doesn't hurt you. For some of them, they have no idea what it's like to be in that game in this arena with those fans supporting South Carolina.

It's bad enough -- it's hard enough you have to play a great team like them, and then to get in there in that game, playing for a championship, man, it just speaks so well and so highly of our kids.

They're so tough today. I wrote on the board, today would be about toughness. It would be about resilience and that



they needed to bring an edge. And I thought we brought the edge.

That first quarter, Justice was really a difference, like she was back in November in Vegas. We executed some really good stuff. We had nine turnovers today. Good job. And we executed some really good stuff and we were really opportunistic in transition. Made some great decisions in the open floor.

Again, you come out and you play that well in that first quarter, and you're like, okay, you know they're going to punch. They're going to counter-punch at some point. I thought what was really impressive to me was after they called time-out, we still won the rest of the quarter, 13-12. We won it by one. And that gave me a real sense of we're good. And, again, this group this morning, we didn't shoot around. I let them sleep in. We had some ice baths at the hotel. We had a good breakfast, had a great film session, and they came ready.

But, again, I thought early, we were running some good stuff. Justice was a real difference early and kind of got us going and the rest is these kids doing it.

We talk about it all the time. We've got a play card that's got so many plays on it, you look at that and go how in the world does everybody keep up with all that?

But when you get into this time of year, you watch film, and you see what certain things you can run and certain things you can do, and with each team that we played here, we probably had a different offensive package. But these kids, that's how special they are. They go out and execute it and run it.

So, again, it's win number 31 for them, and it's a championship. We talk about that all the time at Texas. Winning championships is really important. These kids got on an airplane to come here and win a championship, and you could see today by their focus, by their determination, their toughness that they did it. And you gotta take your hat off to them because they were really special today.

I've been in that game a bunch, as maybe some of y'all know. To play that well in that game against that team in this environment, there's not a lot of words that can describe how special this group is, but they are really special.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Rori, you've been with Vic for a while. What do you think it says about the way y'all played this weekend that he didn't take his jacket off once?

RORI HARMON: I didn't know that. I don't know. Sometimes I feel like he just takes his jacket off because it's genuinely just hot in the building. There's a lot of people there, and there's a lot of people yelling.

I felt like every game, we came out ready to go. I think you can see it on his face that he has a trust factor in his team to get stuff done. It's a game of runs also. There's going to be games -- or a time where we're down or they go on a run, and it's just about composure.

I think it starts with him, and it starts with me. And then it permeates throughout the team. I felt like it was just -- we felt really composed the whole tournament. We felt we were in control a lot of the times.

So I'm glad he didn't have to take his jacket off.

Q. Justice, Coach kind of just alluded to you had an impact in the first match-up in November. Today, 14 unanswered points, a massive start. What allowed you to be as successful as you were?

JUSTICE CARLTON: I really feel like I've talked about this a lot, especially at our home games, just kind of being a star in my role, just being who my team needs me to be.

I did start to feel myself after a certain point. But, yeah, I really just tried to provide for my teammates and do whatever they need me to do.

Q. Rori, this is your last conference tournament and last month or so with this team. What does this win mean to you after five years of being under Vic and seeing this program flourish?

RORI HARMON: You say that it's my last, and I'm trying to not pour so much emotion into it. Kind of just be where my feet are at and not make it such an emotional roller coaster and getting tied up into it being my last.

When you say it out loud, it makes me really sad. But I'm happy at the same time because it's the last one and I'm

happy we came out on top. It's not over. We're going to take a few days off, whatever we get, and get back to work and feed off this energy from this tournament.

It's been a long run here at Texas, and we've won plenty of championships, but I don't think we're finished.

Q. Madison, with the 14-0 start, they were talking about just they were mentally and physically fatigued. I'm wondering if you guys could sense from them that you had snatched something from them with that start, that it was going to make the difference in this game.

MADISON BOOKER: No. I mean, I think as a group, we knew that we had a great start like that, they were going to fight back no matter what.

For us, we just had to stay poised, stay grounded, and just keep doing the same things that worked for us in the first five minutes.

Q. Coach kind of alluded to it, but with South Carolina, the crowd is always a factor. How are you guys able to manage and not let it get to you as they're making those runs throughout the game?

RORI HARMON: I kind of brought it up in our five-people huddle when we get on the court before the ball's even passed in. I just mention when we do go on this run, this is a great basketball team. They're going to find a way to punch back.

I think just staying together on the court, obviously it's so loud. There's so much going on. You're trying to communicate. You're trying to execute both offensively and defensively. Just staying together and staying with our five on the court at that moment.

Q. Madison or Rori, how good can this team be when Justice plays the way she played tonight?

RORI HARMON: Good enough to win a championship, as you can see. Yeah, I mean, I actually -- Justice was my roommate for this trip. I was telling her, I need you to do what you do, basically. I didn't even have to say it, and she was like, I got you.

So I'm just glad that we can get that out of her. I could tell on the look on her face, when she starts -- she's not a huge communicator. When she starts talking and hyping people up, that's when you know she's really locked in. So I could see that in her in the first, what, first minute of the game, really.

So that's just what we're going to need down the line as



well.

Q. The first two times you played them this year, it was a single possession result. What does it say about you guys and the way you've improved this year to win this way and by this margin?

MADISON BOOKER: I think the first two times we played them, we had a lot of mistakes, just not playing team basketball. Sometimes we get out of rhythm and we just turn the ball over or we're not playing team defense or leaving people on an island.

I would say we kind of regrouped after our Vandy loss and talked about how we can help each other on the court. We always talk about that. This is a sisterhood. It shows on the court. We talk about making sure we always have each other's backs on the court, whether we're help, we're sealing, we're doing the wall. So I think that's kind of the mindset we came into this game with.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so much for your time. Congratulations.

We'll take questions for Coach Schaefer.

Q. Vic, did the jacket stay on all this week because you were cold or were you genuinely just pleased with the way you played here in Greenville?

VIC SCHAEFER: I couldn't be more pleased, Danny, with this group. This is win number 31. We've played, to me, the hardest schedule in the country. We've obviously beaten more top 25s than anybody in the country.

I don't know, does anybody else have three wins over top 5 teams in the country? I don't know. You'd know that, or maybe. But I just, I'm really comfortable with this group right now. I like where their head is. I love the start tonight.

You'd be amazed, as a coach, sometimes you plan for things, and you've heard me say this. I coach against a ghost all the time. But do you really -- did anybody, including me, think we were going to jump out 12-0 tonight or 14-0 in this game in that arena with that team?

So, man, your head starts kind of thinking about things, and you want to keep those kids in the moment because, like they said, they're going to make a run, and you've got to be there to answer it. That's what was so impressive. By the end of the first quarter, I'm good. Like they called time-out, we still won the rest of the quarter and I just felt like my group was ready.

They have really, really responded here in the last couple, two, three weeks and are just -- they're in a different zone right now. That's what you want to see out of your team this time of year. You want to see them get better. You want to see them keep working.

We've got kids that continue to work while they wait. I thought Crump was huge for us tonight. Came in, made some big shots. I thought her coming off the bench was just really big. Preston coming in and doing what she did off the bench, those two kids really provided us a big lift.

Judd has been playing well in the tournament, and so I just thought our bench was outstanding but thought Crump really gave us some really high quality minutes, ten minutes, and made some great decisions some great shots.

I am, I'm really happy with this group. I'm happy for them. As you know, the grind of an SEC season is just so hard. And then we went and scheduled who we scheduled in nonconference. So it's just really been one after another after another. Until you go through that, you have no idea how hard it is to prepare every night for some monster.

Like there's just not an off night where you can go, ah, we're going to be okay tonight. Don't worry about practicing or don't worry about not being focused. We didn't have very many of those this year. As I reflect, especially in the last couple weeks, you just have to really appreciate.

By the way, the University of Texas is really hard academically. So they're going to school, they're going to class, they're making good grades. It's just really quite remarkable. I'm really proud of them. Happy for them. To see them be able to stand out there in that confetti instead of walking off the floor while it's falling on somebody else, as a coach, it's probably the most rewarding thing to watch your kids do as an athlete. Because it ain't no fun walking off that floor as it's falling on the back of your back side as you're going in the tunnel. It ain't. I've done it. It ain't much fun.

Q. Vic, another question about the start. Because, ultimately, that helped you win this. What was it about your players and what they were doing that got them so locked in to start the way that you start and set the tone for the game that ultimately won you the championship?

VIC SCHAEFER: I'm constantly just trying to talk to them and get them to understand when you're going to play a team like that, so talented, well coached, and then you're going to play them in that environment, you better bring an

edge because they're going to bring one. But your edge better be sharper, and it better be harder.

So I really -- we talked about the toughness factor. I mean, every time you play against a team like South Carolina, and South Carolina, in particular, they're just -- they play so hard. They're tough. They guard you. They're just -- they're an elite team.

So when you go against that, if you don't bring that, it's not going to be much fun. So I really challenged them last night after the game and then this morning at breakfast -- I've got a friend from Louisiana that says "bring da wood," d-a, "bring da wood," not "the wood," "bring da wood." He sends me a prayer before every game, and he closes it with "bring da wood." He sent me a bat. On the homemade bat, it's a beautiful bat, it's got the University of Texas on it, and it says "bring da wood."

So I tell them, you better bring da wood because, when you get this particular game in this environment, you know they're gonna bring it.

And that's the piece that you respect. So I think our kids understood that, and they came with an edge today.

Q. Coach, a quick two-part question. Strategically, looked like you were making a concerted effort when you guys scored, to defend that inbound pass and not let them get down the court and get a quick pass. Looked like that was part of the strategy. Maybe you could address that.

And then, secondly, what's the difference between Madison Booker from this year to this time a year ago?

VIC SCHAEFER: First of all, to address the whole pressing thing, we do that. Usually, you know, I was fortunate enough to watch Nolan Richardson for six years and his 40 minutes of hell. I've tried to embrace that with my own team. We try to create that with everybody we play against.

My team take great pride. They think they're the toughest team God ever put on the earth. They think they work harder than anybody. And they do. They work pretty hard. But that's something that they really embrace.

We talked about that. We talked about, hey, it's 40 minutes. It's two hours for the rest of your life. You're in the championship game. Let's go lay it on the line. You can have tomorrow off. Hell, you can have Tuesday off. But for the next two hours, no regrets.

And so that's kind of where all that comes from. And,

again, it's how we've played all year.

And then the second part? Oh, yeah, so I think she's more efficient this year. She's always been very efficient. But the kid shoots over 50 percent. She's not a volume kid. Her numbers are up in every category. Field goal percentage, average points, steals, assists, and rebounds are kind of the same. They're at 6.2, 6.3.

But you saw last night, 31 and 11 or 31 and 12 and 5 assists, 3 steals. I mean, what people just don't really understand is that kid enjoys the assist as much as the bucket. Most of these -- there's a lot of players that like to score, and that's what they like to do. But they also don't have the skill set to do much else.

Madison Booker has the skill set to do everything and anything. She's very, very special and she enjoys all of it. She enjoys offensive boards. She enjoys defensive boards. She likes bringing it on the break. She's more than capable.

So, again -- and then what's really different is you add that, then, and her leadership. Last night, Mississippi had cut it to 2 going into the fourth quarter. If you go back and look, I didn't go in the huddle right away because Madison Booker was running the show in my huddle. She was grabbing everybody, keeping everybody close and tight. She had the attention of the huddle and Rori was right there and had her back.

That's the piece that I really tried to encourage her to be is that leadership because the kid's got instant credibility. Hell, in my mind, she's the best player in the country. So when you do that, when you see her evolve into that type of player, man, it's really special as a coach because that's what we try to do in coaching. We try to develop these young ladies. We try to get them ready for the real world. We challenge them every day. We want them to be the best they can possibly be.

I told them today in my pregame, my devotional today was about discipline. It talked about we're all disciplined. Just like a father disciplines a son or a daughter, we're all subject to the discipline. And the game will discipline you too. If you don't play the game right, if you go out and play haphazardly or carelessly, the game will discipline you.

It was perfect. It was really a perfect thought for what we were going to do today. I thought our kids were really disciplined. We made two mistakes that stand out in my mind that were undisciplined. Other than that, I thought our kids played pretty much perfect.

Q. Coach, you talked about coming into this



... when all is said, we're done.®

tournament on a mission. You needed toughness on this mission. You reached pretty much the halfway point to the mountaintop with an SEC championship before getting to the NCAA Tournament. When you look at this team, how do you use this game to serve as a litmus test to see how far you guys can really go in the NCAA Tournament?

VIC SCHAEFER: I think if you could can it or put it in a bottle and put a cork on it, you think hey, if we can undo the cork every game and play like that, it would be a tough out.

That's the challenge with coaching kids. Sometimes you don't know what you're going to get day to day and game to game. They've been -- that's their 31st win so they've found a way to win on most nights. So I think from a confidence standpoint right now, our kids are pretty confident.

I thought they played like that tonight. They executed, shot the ball well. They're starting to understand their roles. We have so many players, can go nine, ten deep. So when you have that many and you have that depth, you've got to understand your roles.

I think we're starting to do that so they've been a fun group all year. They work hard. I enjoy them off the floor as much on the floor. They know I'm always going to be coaching them. I'm always going to be teaching. In victory and defeat, it doesn't matter. I feel like that's my calling. That's my job.

But they've got a chance, and that's all you can ask for.

Q. Vic, you talked about the confetti, but curious what you were thinking as you were helping them cut down the nets and giving them pointers and helping them up the Ladder and taking in that part of the process.

VIC SCHAEFER: It's why you get into coaching, to see those kids, to see how happy they are, to know how hard they work. It's why I do what I do, just to see them in that moment with their phones, families around. Just to see their joy is really cool.

It's one of the real joys for me in coaching to be able to enjoy that with them and see it as I step back and I watch all of it take place. It's one of the real highlights for me, especially in a season when you put so much into it. That's why I'm saying, you can put so much into a year, walk off 32-0 or walk on the court 32-0, and I've walked off that court 32-1. And you hurt for your kids.

So to see my kids in that moment, the joy on their face, the

proud papas and mamas and grandparents and aunties, it makes it all worth it for me. You know, I'm good. It's just very, very satisfying for me to see all those folks in that moment having fun with their daughters.

Q. Vic, winning this game today so far away from your home state probably puts you guys in a good position to play, should you get there, the second weekend of the NCAA Tournament in Ft. Worth, which is very close to your home in Austin. Just curious how important that might be as you go on your journey to try to reach your goals in the NCAA Tournament.

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, as I told Holly today on TV, I'm always a one-game-at-a-time guy. So I'm going to worry like heck over that first round match-up, whoever they send to Austin, and then I'll worry about the 8, 9. Hopefully, we'll be fortunate enough after that. I'll go wherever they send me. I'll take this team to Timbuktu. I don't care. They'll go wherever. They don't care. They're good enough.

So it would be cool to, obviously, be able to stay around because of our fans. I think they would really embrace the opportunity to follow us. But I'm not going to get down that road right now and go down that hole. I'll just worry about the opening round game that we got in the Moody here in a couple weeks.

But I think, again, our kids, what they've done throughout the course of the season, the résumé speaks for itself. We haven't had an off -- a night off where we didn't have to worry about anybody in -- I don't know, been a long time.

Q. Coach, you talked about how it feels to watch the kids celebrate and what this moment means for them. Just for you as a coach, to be able to do it with Jody Conradt in attendance and on an anniversary year of that championship team shortly after you joined the SEC, can you just reflect a little on what it means to you as the leader of this program?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I'm so humbled and honored to be the coach at the University of Texas, having grown up in that state, watching Coach's teams over the years, watching Coach coach.

The impact she had on my life and my career, just watching her, I'm really -- it is humbling and honored. I love the fact she's here with us. It means the world to me. I know it means a lot to our kids.

I'm a coach that's been around a while, and I know the history of our game. You're talking about somebody that between her and Chris Plonsky at our university, they've given so much of their careers, their professional lives to

women's basketball. So I don't take my job, my title, or where I'm at lightly. I'm proud to be able to be the coach at the University of Texas. But I also know the responsibility that comes with that. It's something that I'm very well aware of.

Q. Vic, you talk about roles. This offseason, what was the conversation like with Justice? Did you discuss her future and what you wanted to see from her moving forward after kind of an up-and-down freshman year?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, again, she's the most physical high school kid I've ever seen play the game, and she's always been so good, whether it was AAU or high school.

As we all know, when you get to this level, now you're an 18-year-old going against a 22-year-old. So it's different. Everybody is good so your work ethic, your practice habits all come into play.

So we just really talked about trying to make a step. Again, last year, coming off that injury, that first year back from injury is always difficult. Rori really played really well. That's not normal. But yet, I think we all know Rori's played even better this year.

So for Justice, I knew that first year was going to be probably a little bit rocky, but coming in this year, we obviously -- we needed a four-player that could contribute to our team. In this league, everybody has a monster four-player. Every team's got one.

So we had Justice, and then we went out and recruited Ashton and Teya. All three of those kids have really helped us at certain points in the season. They've helped us win games, and they're great kids.

So I'm happy for Justice. I can promise you, there's nobody on this planet more happy than Coach Schaefer to see Justice Carlton having success. I'm happy for her, and I'm happy for her family. Her mom played. I know her mama is a proud mama, and rightfully so. She comes from a really special family.

So excited to see that. It's something about playing that team, she really likes playing against them.

Q. Coach, you talk about your team's ability to stay calm under pressure and stay disciplined when they're competing in an arena that's full of South Carolina fans. Is that something that's coachable, or is it something your team innately has?

VIC SCHAEFER: It's probably a little bit of all that, but I do

think when you are demanding and when you place a value on being disciplined, I said this last night, you're either coaching it or allowing it. So if you're going to allow undisciplined play, if you're going to allow people to go half tail, if you're going to allow kids to not be focused, then you're going to have that kind of team.

So I do think you can create that and develop it, just like you develop toughness. I think your competitive drills in practice help create the toughness factor. I think our kids are battle-tested. I think they're tested in practice. They go against each other. They go against our men's practice team every day. They are competitors.

Then the schedule that we've played, they are battle-tested. That's the other piece to the devotional today with the discipline was being disciplined when you are tested. Jesus was tested on the mountain. He didn't give in to the devil. Devil promised him all the good stuff, but he didn't give in. He's battle-tested. By the time he got to that mountain, he was tested.

Our kids are battle-tested, and their discipline allows them to get through maybe some times when it might be hard for some teams. And last night, when it got cut to 2 is a great example.

Today, they made a run. I think they cut it back to 11. Our kids responded. I think Jordan Lee had a big 3 over on the corner that got it back to 14.

So, again, that's what we try to create as coaches. We want them to be ready for that moment. We don't want the moment to be too big for them. I don't think any moment is going to happen where it's too big for these kids. Good question. Glad they let you ask it.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, congratulations. Thank you very much.

VIC SCHAEFER: Hey, I appreciate everybody here. Thank you for your coverage. Appreciate everybody to the back and over to the side. It's been a great tournament. To the city of Greenville, it's been wonderful. Praise the Lord and hook 'em horns.

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