

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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## South Carolina Gamecocks Coach Dawn Staley

Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Dawn Staley from the University of South Carolina.

DAWN STALEY: We got the most powerful man in college athletics introducing coaches. We're blessed. We're blessed.

**Q. Is there any day-after effects from MiLaysia rolling her ankle? What were the takeaways seeing your team in a game setting for the first time?**

DAWN STALEY: Haven't gotten the skinny on MiLaysia. I know she was going to see some of our doctors today. She was walking. She was walking after the game.

But it was cool to play in an environment like Memphis and why, why we were able to do the game. The St. Jude's Research Hospital did a fantastic job showing us around, giving us the heartbeat of Memphis. Then for us to play a game.

I think our players were a little bit overstimulated to start the game, but they calmed down a little bit to get back to the habits that this team has formed.

I thought we had great plays from a lot of different people. We were just pretty vanilla offensively only because we wanted to be that way. We got a team that we got to play in Michigan that we didn't want to give a lot of information to, so...

Thought our players did a great job just trying to get better. Everybody that got inserted into the game really made an impact in their way, also really gave us an opportunity to show there's some improvements that we need, that they need individually.

Overall, great showing.

**Q. Joyce Edwards certainly had quite the debut last night. How impactful can she be as a freshman?**

DAWN STALEY: Joyce played extremely well. She played like she's been practicing, so... I didn't know how she'd be just because it's her first college game. She was a little nervous at the beginning of the game, right before we started the game.

I think sometimes with a player like that, they might need to see the game a little bit and anticipate what's going to happen out there on the floor. But the moment we inserted her into the game, she imposed her will on both sides of the basketball.

Super, high intelligent, high competitor, just plays the right way. Very mature for her age.

**Q. We talked a lot last couple months how much better the football has gotten with Texas and Oklahoma. Y'all added two top 10 teams. How much better is women's college basketball with Texas and Oklahoma?**

DAWN STALEY: It's pretty much upgraded what I think is the best conference in the country. They've upgraded us to another level.

We're fortunate in that we get to play Texas twice. We get to play Oklahoma, as well.

Women's basketball is at an all-time high. I am super excited about not just our team but overall. I'm excited to see how the teams that have been spread out over certain conferences, the Big Ten, the ACC, former Pac-12 members. I'd like to see how all that unfolds. I'm super excited.

I know there will be a women's basketball game on every single day of the week. I look forward to tuning in.

**Q. What would you say is the next step in elevation for Raven Johnson?**

DAWN STALEY: The next step?



**Q. Yes, in elevation.**

DAWN STALEY: I think Raven needs to be a little bit more selfish and taking some more shots. I thought she did a great job yesterday of mixing it up, distributing the basketball, being greedy a little bit, keeping her opponent off guard.

If you look at Raven, Raven is very, very, very unselfish. She would much rather pass the basketball. Sometimes as a point guard, you get in the mode of that, you miss out on some scoring opportunities just to keep the defense honest.

That is the next step for her. She's working at it in practice. It was good to see her do some of that in stretches of the game last night.

**Q. Maryam Dauda, what has she added to the team on and off the court?**

DAWN STALEY: Maryam, she is the best young lady that we've added. Culture, we've added that. I think sometimes when you see player like Maryam as your opponent, I don't know, she might have had two or three threes on us, and I just knew she was a really good three-point shooter, right? That's the identifiable thing that we liked about her coming to our team.

But if I told you, that's probably the least efficient thing that she does for us, like with everything outside of that she gives us. She's a really good defender. She's a great listener. She can score. She's got multiple moves. She can dribble the basketball. She's got a certain toughness about her. She's coachable. Anything that we ask her to do, she does.

I do think she's going to help our basketball team. She's going to stretch the floor for us. But we got so much more than a three-point threat.

**Q. How does a championship coach at South Carolina get better during the summertime? Used to be years ago players would go back to their city, play in city leagues. How does a player get better, as well?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, our players are pretty serious about creating pro habits. They want to be pros. Pros get better in the off-season. Every player that has aspirations of getting better, they get better in the off-season. Some of 'em have trainers. Some of 'em stay over the summer. Some of 'em are forced to stay over the summer.

I think we do a really good job at making sure that

whatever we're doing as a team, we leave a lot of time for our players to work on individual skill sets. They feel like they're getting better, and then once it's time for us to get going, get better as a team.

There are 10 to probably 20 minutes each day of our practice we work on skill set. We owe that to them. We owe that to them because when they tell us they want to be WNBA players, we commit to that. Not just our system and what we need to do to win, but for them individually.

**Q. What do you do to get better?**

DAWN STALEY: What do I do to get better? I'm surrounded by, like, great coaches, right? How I get better is just us, us meeting our staff, our coaching staff, coming together in the summer and figuring out how we get better just individually. What was working for us last year, what was not working.

Sometimes we think of reversing it, meaning let's work on the things we weren't good at at the end of the season, and then the stuff that we were good at, let that come after that.

It's just throwing out ideas, allowing coaches to have different perspectives. That's what we want. I just want to win. I just want our players to get better. I want us to get better as a team and a program. That doesn't always derive from what I think. It derives from everybody that's a part of our program.

**Q. You talked about women's basketball at an all-time high. People talk about great players gone, what that is going to do to ratings. How much talent do you see, whether it's young or people that are going to step into bigger roles, around women's college basketball?**

DAWN STALEY: I mean, we're primed. There are household names. Everybody knows JuJu. Everybody knows Hannah Hidalgo, MiLaysia Fulwiley. Everybody will know Joyce Edwards.

The future is incredibly bright. I'm missing a lot of 'em. That's just off the top of my head. All tremendously great players that people want to watch. I do think the decision-makers of our game, they're going to put us on, they're going to put women's basketball on, they're going to put us center stage because the numbers are real.

I know we lost some great ones in Angel and Caitlin, but we gained so much more. We gained so much more talent, skill set and marketability.

I'm really looking forward to it. I'm glad it's happened during a time in which I can attest to it, I can share with



other people who are just now tuning in.

**Q. Obviously you have core principles in your program. Every team has a different personality. Has that team's personality started to emerge, or do you have to see them once the season begins?**

DAWN STALEY: I am probably a more traditional coach, like old school. Probably up until last year, that's the type of team that we had. Last year, if I wasn't a pivoting coach, they would have driven me out of this profession (smiling).

I like for our teams to take on their own identity. This team, they're silly. They like to have a lot of fun. They talk a whole lot, like senseless stuff. It used to get on my nerves early. Now, that's who they are. I can't change who they are. As long as they're working hard, they're super competitive, they're respectful.

Just the flight coming here today, to talk to them about the growth that's taken place outside of us, the way they talk to each other, the way if something doesn't look, sound or feel right, they address it. They really address it. Something I had no idea was going on in their apartments. That is really, really gratifying to know that's the type of culture we have.

I know we have it. I know we have it when it's out front, in front of coaches and our staff. But when it's behind closed doors, that same culture applies to each and every one of them holding each other accountable to the standards that we live by.

It's super cool. But they've changed me. There are things that as a traditional, old-school coach would address, I don't fight those battles anymore. If everybody has on the same sweatsuit and one other player has on a different sweatsuit, right, looks odd to me. I usually say, What is wrong with her? I don't because I know they addressed it.

If I bring it up to them later on, and I did, they said the one that they were wearing, hers was dirty. I mean, I know they handle things like that. It's cool. It's great responsibility that they have to be that way. We allow them to be that way.

It's cool when it's working. Like, it's working for us. I don't know when it will change for us. I'm sure when it does, we'll step in. Right now we don't have to step in because they're doing the work behind closed doors.

**Q. The one thing you lost from last year's team is Kamilla. How do you replace her size? You can't teach size.**

DAWN STALEY: No, you can't. I mean, Kamilla is 6'7". I do think we have a collection of post play that's pretty talented. Then we got some youngsters that are coming up, like Adhel Tac. We got a little bit of her yesterday. She just got cleared to go full maybe two weeks ago. She really hasn't gone full, full, full practice. But she's got the makings of what we've had for the past 10 seasons, which is a dominant big.

She has the makings of that, so we're going to pour into her, not put too much pressure on her. Some of the stuff she did out there, I mean, she reminded me of an Aliyah Boston. The communication out there on the floor, you can hear her. The amount of just support that she has from her teammates. Quite incredible. They're pouring into her. It's a beautiful thing to see.

Is she their competition as far as bigs? Yes. Like, we got a lot of bigs. Seven bigs. How do we play all of 'em? That's hard. But they only want the best for each other. They're learning, they're growing. It's a healthy competition. They are putting the pressure on the coaches to make a decision as to who to play when and how much.

That's the way you want it. It won't be because someone is just playing bad. It's because the numbers are driving the playing time.

**Q. As a coach that sends a lot of players to the WNBA, with the spike in popularity, we saw more racism and online abuse directed at players. Curious, your thoughts on the moment the league is at with the growth, kind of where it and women's basketball as a whole goes from here?**

DAWN STALEY: I missed an important piece of your question. Can you say it again?

**Q. I was curious, we all saw the spike in popularity of the league. With that, what came with it, more racism and online abuse directed at players. What are your thoughts on where the league is with the popularity and what came with it, where it goes?**

DAWN STALEY: You didn't say racism the first time?

**Q. I did.**

DAWN STALEY: I'm sorry, I missed that. That's an important piece.

I mean, we're a sport. Like, we're a sport now. Like, we're getting everything that comes with being a sport. Sometimes when being a sport, people's deliveries are way off, how they express themselves.

For me, I like all communication, good, bad or indifferent. What we do need to work on is how we're delivering the communication and what we're saying, the impact it will have on young people.

When it's all said and done, they're all young people. The more you bring in racism, the more you're bringing in division. Our women's basketball community has been built on unity, doing things the right way, respecting our game always. When we disrespect it unintentionally, we're quick to address it, apologize, move on.

We do feel like there's a certain group of new fans that are disrespecting our game, disrespecting the players that are in it, creating division. They'll get theirs. Like, are they entitled to their opinion? They absolutely are.

For me, I choose to ignore them. I choose to use our platforms to uplift all the things that are positive in our sport. But we do need our leaders to step out there and use their voice when harm is being done to our product.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much.

DAWN STALEY: Thank you. Appreciate it.

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