

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Presbyterian vs South Carolina

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Colonial Life Arena

**Presbyterian Blue Hose**  
**Coach Alaura Sharp**

**Bryanna Brady**

**Christina Kline**

Media Conference

ALaura SHARP: I'm really proud of our team from last night. I thought it was a gutsy, gritty type of win. I love the way that we came out in the first half. I thought we got a little bit back on their heels, and their switching physical defense in the second half bothered us. It's good to have some of that on film to make some corrections and adjustments for tomorrow.

But it's just been great. Our players deserve this. We went around and we were asking what everyone's kind of favorite moment, memory from yesterday was, and everyone just keeps talking about the crowd showing up for us, and I think we all just took a second and realized, we really built that together and have created this awesome fan following and support, and we're so proud and we're so thankful, and we want to see everybody back tomorrow.

**Q. Bryanna, how much does the equation change with Cardoso out for tomorrow's game?**

BRYANNA BRADY: I do think that it changes, like, our game plan a little bit too and then my offensive game play. She definitely affects a lot of shots and whatnot, but the whole South Carolina team as a whole is very athletic and very just able to contribute, I guess, whatever she's, when she's not there.

But I think that I just have to be aggressive. We have to pump fake around the rim, things like that. Be really fundamental with them. I think that her being out definitely gives us a little bit more of a offensive -- makes our offense a little bit easier around the rim.



But regardless, we're going to have to go out there and play. They're a good team. We're a good team. We just have to go out there and be aggressive.

**Q. You guys won an NCAA Tournament game. Something your program had never done before. How do you kind of go right from the joy and jubilation of that to getting back in the game mode and trying to figure out tomorrow?**

BRYANNA BRADY: Yesterday Coach Sharp told us to enjoy the moment and take in all of the love and support that we've gotten and then turn the page as of today. So I think that we took the time yesterday to enjoy it and take it in, and we made history once more. And I think that today we all woke up and knew there's a job to get done. We have to prepare the right way.

I think we all definitely flipped that script, and we're going into practice today understanding that we have a job to get done tomorrow. We have to prepare the right way.

CHRISTINA KLINE: I think we had to do that at High Point. We knocked off a No. 1 seed at High Point. We had to go and play a No. 3 seed like the next day. I think we're used to it, and like you said, I think we're ready.

**Q. What does it mean as a shooter to have played two games here in this arena, and what does the size of the place do to you as far as depth perception and things like that?**

CHRISTINA KLINE: I mean, as a shooter, you just try to focus, like, more on the court than what's going on around outside. But it is definitely helping us, I think, talking to other shooters on the team.

We feel more confident taking those shots yesterday than we did at South Carolina. Not only a different team but just feeling more comfortable because we had practiced as well, another shoot-around. So it just makes us feel more confident.

**Q. Can you kind of break down the game plan, being**

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able to see obviously South Carolina early in the season will help, but how do you deal on the perimeter with the guard play that South Carolina has, especially Fulwiley who can really push the pace and keep the pressure on your defense before you're able to set up?

CHRISTINA KLINE: I mean, just high hands. High hands, try to discourage a shot, but just try to stay down. And as far as we can, as well as keeping a high hand but be ready for that first step.

**Q. Bryanna, I was wondering, this team is the smallest Division I school to be in this tournament right now, to be dancing, but it seems like it's one of the biggest hearts when you talk about a program, when I was here yesterday, like, it was all blue. Which obviously the road trip is a little easier for you guys than it was for Sacred Heart but describe the heart of this program and how you've seen it grow through its fan base this past year?**

BRYANNA BRADY: So when we first started out this year, we definitely had to struggle with just people coming to our games and getting people there. But regardless of that, our team never took that to heart. We knew people were behind us, but we stayed together. We leaned more into each other. Of course we had some injuries and whatnot, grew our hearts, made us closer together. It didn't matter what was going on around us; we had each other. So that was okay. But the last couple of weeks toward the end of the season and whatnot we did some things to get people in the crowds and it made our gym get more packed, get more full, and it made those games really fun to be in and experience that type of atmosphere. Seeing people yesterday coming out and just being dressed in blue.

It was such a great feeling seeing all those people out there in the crowd. I think that our coaching staff and all those who are behind the scenes did a lot to get people here and to get people at our games, and I really appreciate that because they don't understand how much that they changed the game for us.

**Q. How do you think you guys can kind of lock in and stay focused knowing that South Carolina will be at home and they will have a ton of fans here tomorrow?**

CHRISTINA KLINE: Some places we did in conference, we went to -- had the same, High Point, they have a nice arena with a lot of fans. I think we do a good job as a team staying focused on the court because we have each other.

Like Tillie does a good job at saying we've got to stay together within us and don't worry about anything outside.

**Q. Situation like this, 16 and a 1, is it harder or easier to go in and play loose like you're playing with house money?**

CHRISTINA KLINE: I think it's better to play loose. We played them before and we were kind of tight before. That didn't really go our way. I think just being able to play them before and now I think we can go in loose knowing that, like, we don't really have anything to lose. So just play together and see where it takes us.

BRYANNA BRADY: I agree. I think that it's easier to play as the underdogs. Like I said before, everybody knows that we're the underdogs. It's not a secret.

So going out there and just being able to play basketball and be loose and understand that we have nothing to lose as far as going out there playing hard, playing together, doing the things that got us here. I think we'll be okay if we go out there and we execute the game plan doing what we've been doing to get us to this point now.

**Q. Was there a particular person that you guys heard from after the game yesterday, whether it's family from home, people here around you, that was special to you to be able to kind of celebrate that moment.**

BRYANNA BRADY: Lucky for me my parents actually flew down here were able to be here at the game yesterday and they'll be there tomorrow. After the game, they definitely hugged me and told me how much they were proud of me, how much they loved me and stuff like that. It means so much that they were able to experience this moment with me.

Going back to the hotel and being able to talk with them, and my dad, he's the most analytic person in trying to coach me up. So we watched the game back and he told me what to do here, what to do there. It was really good just being able to experience -- that was back when I was starting to play in high school or AAU. That's what he used to do. So it felt good for him to be on my side, for my mom to show me some love and just be there with them.

CHRISTINA KLINE: Well, I couldn't make it off the court without my dad coming and stopping me and giving me a hug. He's been there for AAU and every game. He just kind of told me -- he couldn't really say it because it was so emotional, that this is probably my biggest game in my basketball career. I think that's what kind of set the emotions after the game for me.

**Q. Similar question to what I asked the players. You guys won an NCAA Tournament game. Win or lose tomorrow, it's already been an unbelievable season**

**filled with accomplishment. How do you kind of balance what's already happened with what tomorrow is?**

ALaura SHARP: Well, anybody close to me knows that I'm all about the mindset of you only live once and you want to soak everything in, making memories is why you play college basketball. It grows you as a person.

For me, as the head coach, I want to build relationships. I want to grow young women, and I want to give them a great student-athlete experience, and we've checked that box.

We've made memories together, and exactly what they said. Soak it in tonight. And then we have to wake up with the mentality of, obviously we're the underdog, but we've got to find a way, me as the head coach, I have to be the engineer of belief.

And our coaching staff has to put together a game plan and then go out there on the court and present it in practice and then our players have got to go out and scrap and believe in each other.

It doesn't matter if anyone believes but us, but we can't step on the court without that type of belief in our hearts and knowing that we can compete and keep it in striking distance because we know if we do that, they'll be tight. We'll have nothing to lose and we'll put ourselves in a great position.

**Q. Your sixth season at PC, why this year, why this team, to be able to make this historic run?**

ALaura SHARP: I say it as the power of human connection. I think there's so many ups and downs of a season, and when you can create a culture of relationships matter and putting the team before yourself because you're not always going to make all the shots or you're not always going to get all the playing time that you want, you're an ankle sprain away from somebody else taking your minutes then you've got to earn those back.

So playing college athletics is really, really hard, but it's so much better when you get a group of people together that really love each other, from our coaching staff to our team, and we have so much love and respect that I just think that's why we're here.

I think the adversity has helped us reach higher and dig deeper. I think that they just have stepped up, and the other way I describe it is invisible progress, that we do a lot of player development in our program, and I just think about last night, when Christina Kline made that kind of

fade away jumper and you just see some of the things we work on and the head-down work that they've done starting to show up at the right time.

We've played really good basketball at the right time. That's what you set out to do. And maybe we didn't look like this team in January and February, but that's what we needed to get where we are, and I'm so glad that they stuck with me because I think a lot of players could have said, well, I'm done trying your way, it hasn't worked in a while.

But they just kept believing in the one way, and that's why we're here.

**Q. What's the plan for tonight?**

ALaura SHARP: Tonight as in our prep?

**Q. What are you going to do to -- it's pretty early start time tomorrow. What's the plan tonight? Are you going to watch the Hoosiers?**

ALaura SHARP: We'll watch film of South Carolina. We'll go into the practice. We'll present the game plan. Talk through it. Obviously we can't do a whole lot. We want to protect our legs because South Carolina does have the advantage from not having to play the play-in game, and they'll be a little more fresh. I need to make sure we're mentally and physically fresh and want to go out and play tomorrow.

So we'll go back and we'll watch some film and we'll eat some dinner. Our team is basketball junkies. So the ones that don't go hang out with their families will probably turn some basketball on and sit in there as the team, and the coaches, we'll go back and do more work and make sure we're ready for our walk-through in the morning. The first night we were here, we went and did an escape room.

The first night that we went to the Big South Tournament we went and hung out. It goes back to what I said in the earlier question of making sure we've got good balance of making memories and also when it's time to work, it's time to work.

**Q. Do you think it helps you guys that you were here in this building before? You saw the crowd and understand -- you understand fully or a little bit better than most teams who come here for the first time what you're going to face.**

ALaura SHARP: I've seen South Carolina games on TV, but there's no way -- I don't care how many times you turn speakers, loud noise and you try to practice with a lot of

noise, there's no way to simulate this environment besides playing in it.

And I don't know what they do or if they make some noise up on the video boards, but there are moments in the game where it roars with noise and yelling and it's like I look like I'm only moving my mouth to the players. They have no idea what I'm saying.

It's an awesome environment to play in. I'm looking forward to it. I do think that there's an advantage that we played in it before.

I think there's an advantage to already playing South Carolina. Probably for them and us, honestly, because we can make adjustments and we can see what they adjusted and did and what bothered us and what bothered them. And you can put together a good game plan.

Tomorrow comes down to what team's grown the most and what team wants it the most. Looking forward to the challenge, honestly.

**Q. How much does Cardoso being out change your game plan or maybe the way you'll have your match-ups and personnel go out there?**

ALAURA SHARP: Well, they have a lot of depth. They've played without her before so I think that's the advantage, it's not their first time they've had to figure it out.

We've tried to go back and study some of those game film to see who do they go to, who do they want the ball, because she's such a big part of their offense. But it does take off a little bit length, but they still have so much athleticism. And I think the other thing is they'll lean more into their guard play. They have really awesome guards. But I do think it might open up the rim just a little bit.

Obviously defensive rebounding is a challenge without her in there, but sometimes in our game we were boxing Cardoso out with two and three people unsuccessfully.

So I do think that there will be a little bit of a less challenge on the defensive glass. It will still be a real challenge for us, but I think that just the length it will be a little bit less, but I still think that we still have to protect the paint with or without her. There's still a lot going in there from their offensive rebounding.

**Q. Obviously you're a quick ride down 26 here. You're so aware of Dawn Staley and how she's built this program. She said she spoke with you guys earlier this week. What does she mean to the game, and some of the fan base you saw last night because**

**you're trying to kind of establish your own program like she has here?**

ALAURA SHARP: I mean, I look up to her so much. It meant everything to us that she took the time to come by and speak with our team. And our team was fangirling, honestly. They've got to turn that gear off tomorrow when we go out on the court. I know they will.

But part of the reason why the women's game is where it is is because of her. There was obviously a lot of amazing coaches a long time ago that really set the table, but everything she does is to build her program and to grow the women's game and how she handles herself, I want to be just like her, and I think she's a good ball coach, too.

Obviously she's a great recruiter, and I think one of the most amazing things that she does is she keeps those kids locked in that are on the bench that could be starters at other places, and I think that's so much to look up to. And I just appreciate her and exactly how she's grown her fan base and what she's done for the game in South Carolina.

One of my favorite headlines through all this has been something to the effect -- I can't remember exactly what it said -- but it said there's history being made in women's basketball and it's not happening in Columbia. And I love that because we want to be like them. Obviously we're on a different scale and a different level but so much respect for her and what she's done for the game.

**Q. We know what South Carolina is as a collective, as a unit. Is there one or two players that are just a problem and a match-up nightmare for you guys?**

ALAURA SHARP: There's definitely more than one or two probably. I think MiLaysia Fulwiley is obviously unbelievable guard. She has great speed. The guard we saw last night has some similar moves to her obviously Fulwiley is a lot bigger and maybe has a little bit more in her bag.

I think no matter who they have, what lineup they play on the floor, we need to team defend. That's what's gotten us here. That's what we're good at. That's what we hang our hat on is we have pretty good size and length too. It's not going to come down to can we play one-on-one here, can we play one-on-one here. It's going to come down to executing the scheme, working our mental game and having great toughness throughout the course of the game, because we have got to adjust in our defensive rebounding and make sure that we're not just turning and boxing, but we've got to create a cavity, box out quicker to try to limit them to one shot.

I mean, we went back and looked at over 60 of their points came from second-chance points, transition points, points off turnovers. We've got to cut those out to put ourselves in a position.

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