

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Colonial Life Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Dawn Staley

Milaysia Fulwiley

Chloe Kitts

Media Conference

Carolina's 68, Presbyterian 57

DAWN STALEY: We were happy to get out there and knock some rust off. I thought Presbyterian did a great job spacing the floor and utilizing the weak side of the floor. They really did a great job at getting some easy buckets against us.

They made us adjust, and I thought our team did a great job adjusting, especially in the third and fourth quarters. Then we got some really good play. I mean, with the two that are sitting up here, Chloe was perfect from the floor with a double double. Lay did a great job knocking down some threes for us.

Q. MiLaysia, you said after the SEC tournament you had some nerves. Today didn't look like any. What's been the feeling out process. Take a couple possessions to settle down? What was that like?

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: Me and me team, we just doing a great job just moving on to the next. I feel like today we focused on winning this game so we can just prepare for next game.

Q. Chloe, you were feeling it today, looked like. Was it important for you to have this kind of game knowing Kamilla wasn't going to be there and Bree was out, too?

CHLOE KITTS: I feel like it was important for my confidence. Recently I've been low on confidence, by my



coaches and teammates uplift me and they were finding me and passing me the ball, yeah.

Q. This was your first NCAA tournament game. What was the experience like for you?

MILAYSIA FULWILEY: It was great. You know, the atmosphere was great because we were home, so I loved that. It was just happy. I was just excited to be here, really, with my teammates and just living in the moment. Just enjoy every step of the way.

Q. For Chloe, North Carolina is next up for ya'll on Sunday. What do you remember about the game earlier this year and what do you think are keys for you going into that one?

CHLOE KITTS: Last time we played them they rebounded very well. It was pretty close game. We just got to play together, play aggressive, out-rebound them and just keep playing how we been playing, playing together, and we'll be fine.

Q. Dawn, Bree's status, is she okay? She just needed to stay out today? Got like a lingering issue or something that you're concerned about?

DAWN STALEY: No. Not concerned. I mean, just something that we felt like we had enough to go into this game and win the game then we'll see how she feels tomorrow.

But she was fine.

Q. You mentioned a second ago about your team adjusting second half. Anything specifically you felt like they adjusted well to that can help you Sunday and going forward?

DAWN STALEY: I don't know if Sunday it will help us. I just thought they thwarted our ability to guard on the weak side of the floor. We did a much better job collectively. Some players do have some work to do when it comes to that, but we did a great job covering up for -- from the first half to the second half.



Q. You mentioned earlier in the week you stopped by the team hotel for Sacred Heart and Presbyterian. Coach said yesterday her girls were kind of fan-girling seeing you. What makes it important to do stuff like that and give these 16 seeds a good time down here in Columbia, would you say?

DAWN STALEY: They requested it. I mean, they requested it. You know, if -- if they have enough just -- I wouldn't say gull, but to want to meet me, I'm going to make it possible for them to meet me.

Even if they just know some of the history of our game, I think that was really important. I'm all for making sure our history is in a great place.

But we talked more about me being on the Martin show than actually basketball stuff.

Q. Dawn, this was another -- again, you knew were going to be without Kamilla. The team has won all their games when she hadn't played. Were you happy with how they responded having two starters out today?

DAWN STALEY: Yes. Yes. I mean, granted, you want your full squad. We been very successful when we've had our full squad.

We have two starters out, and I don't -- in preparation of it, I don't think about having two starters out. We just we are about who we have that's ready to play, and we just try to coach them up.

So I mean, they have had enough experience. Well, Feagin started for us before. She's one of our most experienced post players. She did a great job.

Tessa on the other hand, she has to start here and there. But it was good for her to feel what it's like to start. Because it's cool to start, but have to do that on a regular basis. It's taxing mentally, physically, and you're held to a certain responsibility every day in practice.

So it's cool to do it, it's cool to be that starting five. But then, you know, being come Game 5, half of the season, come end of the season when you're banged up, when you have to fight through mentally and physically, you don't know what that feels like.

She's got a glimpse of what it feels like to it in the post season play, and she got her work cut out for her.

But I think she just held her on. Didn't hit any shots today.

But it was really good learning lesson for all of us and for her.

Q. Dawn, just your memories from the UNC game earlier this year. Played you close in the Sweet 16 a few years ago. What you're looking at and why they've been able to keep the games competitive last few times.

DAWN STALEY: What they do they do well. They get down in transition. They push the ball at you. Ustby runs incredibly well and they get her the ball early in their offense.

Deja Kelly is hard to deal with, especially in ball screen action. She's a seasoned guard that plays really well.

Gakdeng is a great addition to their team and she does a great job holding serve in the paint and makes it very difficult for teams to drive that ball at them.

Donarski, great defender. She's a dagger like player if you give her open looks. Just real great cohesive team that plays really physical. If you beat them you have to beat them. There isn't any -- they're not going to give you anything easy.

So it should be a battle. Should be a battle on Sunday.

Q. Chloe was talking about her confidence a seconds ago. Where do you see the biggest difference in her than last March and how much did you think going through a tournament last year off the bench helps her right now?

DAWN STALEY: I mean, last year helped her work a little bit harder in the off-season to really understand what she needs to do to play at this level and consistently play at this level.

I think just, you know, she's really a freshman when you really look at it. So I think she's handled it well. Again, it's taxing. It is really, really hard to play consistently at this level. The schedule that we continue to have in the non-conference, our conferences is pretty hard.

I think her progression is going quite nicely. She's well above what a normal freshman plays like.

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