

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 1 Final - Oregon State vs South Carolina

Sunday, March 31, 2024

Albany, New York, USA

Times Union Center

**Oregon State Beavers**  
**Coach Scott Rueck**  
**Raegan Beers**

**Talia von Oelhoffen**

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference



Just fearless, courageous, together, everything that's right is this team. In our sport where it seems like controversy is the flavor all the time for some reason, and we all have to have something to whine about, this team just keeps it simple and does everything right, and y'all are probably bored with it. Shame on you. That's what I'd say.

Everybody needs to get to know this team, everybody needs to watch this team, and everybody needs to be like this team. The world would be better if everyone focused on this instead of a lot of the other things.

I couldn't be more proud of a group, more happy to be a part of them, and more grateful.

**Q. Raegan, Talia, congratulations to you both on the season that you had. Raegan, just talk about what it meant to you to go up against Kamilla Cardoso, somebody who, if she chooses to go, is going to be likely a lottery pick, and what did you learn about your own game today being able to play her even on the boards, defensively, you name it?**

RAEGAN BEERS: We learned a lot today. Obviously playing the No. 1 team is a great challenge for everybody, and so South Carolina is a great team. We wish them the best of luck. Kamilla is a phenomenal player. If she decides to go to the draft, going to go high in the draft. We learned a lot about ourselves as a team, and we learned that we can play with anybody. No. 1 in the country, No. 2 in the country, whoever it is, we learned we can play with them.

Scott mentioned down 12 going into the fourth quarter, he challenged us: Can you do it? And looking around in the eyes of my teammates, we all believed that we could. Obviously we fell short tonight, but we learned that we can play with anybody. And Kamilla is a phenomenal player. I wish her all the best. She's going to do great things in the WNBA.

**Q. Talia, in this era of transfer portal. And we know what's happening with the Pac-12, can you just talk about the culture of this team and what made you guys**

South Carolina 70, Oregon State 58

SCOTT RUECK: I thought South Carolina, they're a great team. They played great today. Really did a nice job on the boards. Hurt us in transition. Adapted well when we went zone. Eventually got comfortable, hit some big shots. Defended us well. They're a very good team, so congrats to Dawn and to her team and their fans and everybody.

This means that our season ends, and so I was just telling the team in there, I've gotten to talk a lot about great teams for a lot of years, and more importantly, great people, a lot of years. This team, it rivals any team I've ever been a part of. What they did this year is not common. It's not normal. We're not supposed to be here.

But we are, and the people in the room get it. Not surprised by it.

Y'all got to see it today, a fearless, gritty, tough display of competitive fire and passion and togetherness that is as inspiring as anything. What's more inspiring than what you all just watched? Those of you who have been paying attention, which is not most of you, all year long, you would know that from day one. If you were with us in Italy, you would have seen what you saw today: Passion, unbelievable energy, togetherness, and a competitive fire that's just not normal.

Down 12, going into the fourth quarter. So? That's all I had to say. We're down 12 to the No. 1 team starting the fourth quarter. Let's go. Can we do it?

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**gel together and what do you think the future is for this program going forward with Scott?**

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: Yeah, I think the future is super bright, and we don't focus too much on the portal. Obviously that's become more of a thing in college basketball, but that's not something that we really discuss too much. We're focused on ourselves, our program, our culture and growing that.

And all year with conference realignment, all the things that could be distractions or things that you could talk about, we've just put our heads down and controlled what we can control and got to work and stayed together and stayed connected, and it's gotten us really far.

RAEGAN BEERS: I would second that. Talia alluded to it. At the beginning of this season, her saying for our team was "Helmets on." So block out anything on the sides that could distract us this season to get us here. And we went back to that before a lot of different games, just helmets on. Ignore the crowd, ignore the rest, ignore the other team. Focus on each other because that's when we're at our best, when we love each other and we're playing for each other. That's been our focus all year, and that's what has gotten us this far.

**Q. Talia, I know that obviously this was not the outcome you guys wanted, but what you guys have been able to do this season has been incredible. How much do you reflect on this moment in your decision to commit to Oregon State, to stay at Oregon State when you could have entered the transfer portal, to believe in Coach Rueck, to believe in your team and to believe in yourself this season?**

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: Yeah, I think just after the adversity that we faced our first two years, it's just a matter of looking in the mirror, and for me, just what can I do to make things better here, and I think the grass is green where you water it. That's just always been my focus.

I saw it as a challenge to rebuild this program and the culture. I came here to go to the Elite 8s. Obviously Final Four is a goal, but to win games like this and to go this far and this deep in the tournament, so I just stayed on that path, and I continued to believe in the vision that Coach Rueck had and the culture of this program.

I think that's just it, just that belief. That's what got this team where we are, and that's why we were able to go this far being picked 10th. It's just the belief that we had in each other all year. I've had that since I stepped on campus.

RAEGAN BEERS: Can I just -- Talia this season has done a phenomenal job of leading this team. From last year to this year, drastic change. Beginning of this year, picked 10th in the conference, and to do what we did and with Talia leading this team this whole season and staying with it when she could have transferred, and believing what Scott built here is incredible.

We would not be here without Talia. She has led us mentally. She has so many cool illusions. I point out one of them, keeping our mindsets and our heads clear. Talia has been harping on that all year for us. And that leadership on our team is a reason we were able to make it this far. Just wanted to say that.

**Q. Raegan, how frustrated were you when they called that third foul on you? Because from our vantage point it didn't look like maybe it was a foul, and did that affect the way that you had to play in the second half knowing that you had three fouls?**

RAEGAN BEERS: Yeah, obviously playing with three fouls is not easy. It's something that I've had to do a lot of, and that's on me. But just weathering the storms, I guess. South Carolina is going to go on runs and they're going to get calls, we're going to get calls, vice versa. So just being able to weather that.

I've learned a lot recently in college basketball that it may not -- I might not think it's a foul in the moment, but maybe it is afterwards. But it's not like they can change that. So what they call is what they call. You've got to move on to the next play. Whether it was a foul or not, we had to get our minds right on defense.

There wasn't really a lot about that. My next step was just, all right, it was a foul, let's get this box-out and let's try not to foul again when I go back in.

**Q. Raegan and Talia, just all these things about the season that you've had and the culture that you've built and everybody on this team has more eligibility here, and yet with the situation that the school is in, with changing conferences next year, what sense do you have of how many people will be back next year?**

RAEGAN BEERS: I guess we don't really have a sense. Our season just ended, so we haven't obviously talked about that at all. We don't know where each other are individually for that. We can't really answer that.

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: I think just like I said, we've been controlling what we can control all season. There's no reason to look at next year. I think all year people have been saying this team is young, this team, no seniors, but

we're still in this year, and we've been so present, and it's why we were able to go to the Elite 8 this year.

It wasn't let's see how far we can go and then next year go all the way. It was we're in this year. And so I'm sure with conference realignment and all this other stuff going on, all the distractions that we have been shutting out, I'm sure there will be conversations because the future is uncertain for the university.

But like I said, this team is so mature and has done a great job keeping the main thing the main thing, and it got us to the Elite 8 and playing right there with the No. 1 overall seed.

That's where we're at.

**Q. Raegan, going off that a little bit, you guys were a really young team, and if everyone is to come back, this year no one expected it but next year people will. What about this squad and particularly Talia makes you feel like you guys will be ready for those expectations and that pressure?**

RAEGAN BEERS: I feel like this season is going to help us be ready for next year. We're going to reflect a lot back on this last season, just see the confidence that we had in each other. That just drove us to make it this far because a lot of people didn't think we were going to be here. But we had belief within each other and belief within our team. That's what drove us here.

We're going to be reflecting a lot as that drives us into next season and just pushes the culture and continue to add to that culture that Scott has created and that Talia has fostered within us this year.

**Q. Talia, talk about a little bit of your relationship with Donavyn Hunter because this year as a freshman, what she's done for you guys and the contribution she's put in has been something truly special. You've been constantly giving her advice. What have those interactions been and what's it been like for you watching her grow, taking every game, every moment and learning from it?**

TALIA VON OELHOFFEN: Yeah, I think there's definitely a balance. I've been in her place of being a freshman that has to play a big role, especially preseason beginning in Pac-12 there's mistakes that you just have to make and that you have to learn from. Kind of being like a coach on the floor, there's so much I can say and so much that I see, but she does a great job figuring things out on her own.

A lot of the time she makes a mistake, she knows, and she

knows how to fix it. So it's kind of just getting that out of her system, and she's so mature and so calm and so steady, and that's why she's able to be such a great point guard as a freshman.

There's definitely times where I've had to get on her. I've had things to tell her. But it's few and far between, especially this late in the season. She's our rock. She runs the show for us.

I don't know, I think there's moments where I need to lead and I need to kind of be a coach to her, but for the most part, the coaches take care of that. And she's very smart, and so she sees things, too, and so just kind of letting her figure it out this season.

It's been incredible to watch and special to be a part of, and to see her leadership grow, as well. I think the thing I've probably said to her the most this year is: You have to call plays. You have to talk. You have to communicate. So getting on her about that has probably been the biggest thing. It's just leading her to lead us. And so she's done a great job of that, and to see how much more vocal she's become over the season has been incredible, and I can only imagine how much more she's going to grow in the next few years.

**Q. I know there's no units in women's basketball to put a fiscal number on it, but can you quantify the value of what this run means to your program, to the university, to the future?**

SCOTT RUECK: Well, it's my university, so I care. It's my mom's university. She's sitting back there.

I mean, one thing I'll say, it's hard hearing your school talked about the way it's been talked about and in a way devalued. Clearly I don't see it that way, coming back to my school and creating a program that has the ability to fill a stadium or an arena, coliseum, to turn a community and a region on its ear kinda has been a dream of mine, and we've done that. We've done it at the highest level, and we've gotten to this point a couple times now.

What the value is, I don't know, but I know the timing of it is really great. We've been drug through the mud, just like today listening to you guys talk. I don't see what y'all see. We're closer to Portland than Oregon is, are we not? So media -- I don't know. All I know is Beaver Nation is awesome, and Oregon State is an incredible university, and it's an unbelievable home away from home for our students. We can compete with anyone from there.

I don't know what the value is, but I know that happened, and it's probably perfect timing for Beaver Nation, and it's

been a joy of mine to put smiles on people's faces, especially this year.

**Q. Just to jump off what I was talking to Raegan about a little bit, and you spoke about it yesterday, that part of what you've done here is to make pros. So when you see somebody do this as a sophomore -- I go back to Ruth Hamblin and you look at what she put up numbers-wise which was incredible and you sent her on to the WNBA, Raegan is ahead of where she was as a senior as a sophomore in every number you can come up with. How good can she be, and what's the distance left to travel from here to when you finally send her on her way?**

SCOTT RUECK: Sky's the limit. I would equate Rae a little bit more to Marie Glich than Ruth.

It's ironic, Ruth and Rae have very similar personalities. If you got to know them, you'd see a lot of similarities in their qualities as a human. But the versatility Rae has, she's very guard-ish. You saw her run the point a little bit tonight, and she can do that.

She can shoot the three. We haven't used that a lot. It hasn't been a go-to thing for her yet, but it's evolving, and it's something that is there. She hit a couple last year, and I don't know if she made one this year or not, but she's capable.

At that level, you've got to be able to be consistent from the perimeter, and that's why I would say more like Marie. Marie is dominating the world right now as a center and can slide to the power forward spot, which Rae can. She's so versatile. Her passing abilities allows her to be a perimeter player. So as that perimeter shot develops to go along with an unguardable inside game, sky's the limit.

You put all the character with it, so it's just this trajectory that's not going to quit until she decides to hang it up.

**Q. You guys were within two, I believe it was about midway through the third quarter, and then they went on that big run, what they've been doing to people all year. How difficult is it when they start rolling downhill like that?**

SCOTT RUECK: Difficult. I think during that stretch -- I mentioned it yesterday as we were getting ready for this game, the difference in this team is their ability to consistently knock down threes. That's what makes them what they are in my opinion. South Carolina will always be a great rebounding team. They'll always have an inside presence. They always have. They'll always have people that can really defend and disrupt.

They haven't always had consistent perimeter scoring, and this team does. That's what ended up hurting us. We gave up some rebounds during that stretch. The foul situation probably was an impact because we were out there walking on eggshells playing in a china closet trying to avoid that fourth or fifth foul, and so because of that, you play a little tentative and it seemed like our rebounding effort was a little tentative during that stretch, and that's what makes them who they are. They can turn you over and get a bucket, get O-boards, miss, get another one, miss, get another one, and finish, knock the three down. We just were unable to answer offensively during that stretch, and that was probably the biggest thing, and give them credit for a great defensive effort all day.

**Q. You talked about the team being like this, having this potential all year. Going back to probably your first big game of the year, tied with Villanova sort of late in the game, did you know back then by how they responded that this was not just possible but likely?**

SCOTT RUECK: That was day one. That was the day that it was evident that this group had, in my opinion, just all the characteristics of what it took.

To be able to close out a team that's used to winning like Villanova, especially at that time, I mean, they're coming off a 30-win season, we're Game 2 for both of us. I know when you come off that, you're confident you're winning. A close game, you win.

We had to overcome that belief in them that day, and our execution on both ends of the floor -- a year ago we couldn't get the stop we needed. This year we got the stops we needed, we scored, and that was maintained throughout the year. That was day one for us, the first big win, and it felt like a conference game that day.

**Q. You made that run at the end to cut it to four with about 3:50 or so left and then couldn't hit one. Shots weren't falling or their defense turned up? What was the difference in that last stretch?**

SCOTT RUECK: I thought we got lots of great shots. Looking back on it, we had one empty possession that I didn't like during that stretch. But we came out of a time-out, I believe, and we had a pretty good look that we missed, and I thought we got about every shot we wanted down the stretch of this game. They just didn't fall.

Then give them credit for not giving us two. They did a great job on the defensive boards which put a lot of pressure on our shooters, and then it got to seven, and then we were pressing and I thought we took maybe one

rushed shot during that stretch. But I really liked our execution, and I thought we got the looks.

But in this game today, we had to be near flawless, and we just weren't able. We just weren't quite flawless enough.

**Q. The final scoreboard I don't think is going to reflect how great you guys played, but the one stat line that caught my eye was you guys holding them to 33 percent shooting from the field. What do you think this performance by you guys, especially defensively, showed the nation when the talk has been just give us one game to show what we can bring to you?**

SCOTT RUECK: Just who we are. Who we are. You've got a team that's supposed to beat us. They were supposed to beat us by 15 or 16, somebody told me that, and everybody knows it was a closer game than that it felt, and we had to overcome a lot of adversity today.

I don't know, just all the stuff I said at the beginning, I guess. I just think that this team, we're a tough out. We were a tough out all year long. We're tested. We're battle tested and we're fearless.

I think it seemed fearless to me. It really did. I thought we looked fearless today, and I thought we gave ourselves a chance to win, which I had hoped. That's all anybody can hope. We were there with three minutes to go. Give them credit for making the plays down the stretch.

**Q. Could you speak on from a coach's perspective the way Dawn Staley has built up South Carolina's program?**

SCOTT RUECK: Yeah. She's been there -- we talked before the game, 16 years, and I've been here 14. I don't remember exactly what it was like when she took over, but I'm pretty confident it wasn't like it is now.

Dawn obviously, she's a legend. She's a Hall of Famer. If she's not in the Hall of Fame for coaching, she obviously will be. She's an Olympian. She's got every -- she checks every box. She's a great competitor.

When you've got a coach like that, you're going to get talent, and she's going to rally their fans, and they're supported extremely well. I think they're 104-3 over the last three years now, something like that. I read that. That's not an accident. They're very well-coached, and they're very disciplined, and they've got two starting lineups on their team.

She's doing a great job, obviously. But I think -- yeah, I just don't see a lot of weakness really in anything they do from

any angle.

**Q. You mentioned how you felt the foul trouble may have affected perhaps the way that you played. How do you feel about the officiating in this game, particularly Raegan's third foul?**

SCOTT RUECK: I was blocked out on it, so I couldn't see it with my own eyes. I've been told it probably wasn't an accurate call. That's what I've heard. I'm not here to get in trouble or anything. But clearly there were a couple calls right there that were -- that massively influenced this game, and you just hope they were accurate.

**Q. Specifically the Raegan-Kamilla matchup, how tough is it to officiate a battle down low like that, and how do you think that went?**

SCOTT RUECK: Well, I would have liked Rae to be able to play a little more free in this game. Three fouls in the first half, nobody wants to see that. The way the game was going, I felt like my hand was kind of forced to have her out there in that second quarter to finish up, to stay close.

I mean, when you're back is to the wall like that, you kind of -- you've got to roll the dice a little bit.

I loved the battle. I mean, that's what everybody wants to see, right? Nobody wants to see foul trouble. You just want to see them go at each other, and as long as it's logical, let it happen. Just let them play. I don't want fouls, but I want it to be what everybody would want it to be, common sense. I don't know if that left the building or not today, but that's what I wanted to see.

When it was like that, it was fantastic. Those are two great players that are so skilled and so talented and have systems that are built to feature them both, so this time of the year you pray to see the best go at it, and that's great sport.

So when it was like that, it was great sport.

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