

GEICO Players Era Women's Championship

Wednesday, November 26, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Dawn Staley

Joyce Edwards

Raven Johnson

Women's Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 83, Duke 66

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes first.

Q. For either of the players, Madina had 23 points, career high. Can you describe her development this year.

JOYCE EDWARDS: We all know Madina is a great player. We knew coming in she was going to be a star. I feel like she's finally coming into her true self.

She's dominant in the paint. Hard to stop her. She's very mobile. Great overall player. Now you're seeing it.

Q. Raven, obviously as a point guard, vision and seeing the court is a big thing. Could you explain what you see when you have a big like Joyce running the fastbreak? What kind of a luxury is that for your team?

RAVEN JOHNSON: I love when Joyce run the floor. We talk about this all the time. Joyce, run the floor, you know I'm going to hit you. She runs the floor. She knows the ball is coming. It's like poetry in motion.

Q. Joyce, you had six rebounds, six assists to go with 22 points. Can you talk about your development as a passer and how you're seeing your teammates.

JOYCE EDWARDS: I mean, you just see the floor. I mean, I've been playing basketball for a long time. You know somebody else is coming. When you know somebody else is coming, you pass it. It's that simple.



I just go out there and play basketball, and that's it.

Q. We talk about you two a lot. Is there an underrated player we should be talking about more from the teammate?

RAVEN JOHNSON: Tessa Johnson. She might don't get the shots that she want or hit the shots that she want, but she does things we need for this team. It's the little things. She's also a leader. In the huddle she say things that should be said. Coach says it all the time, Tessa does things this team needs. So Tessa Johnson.

JOYCE EDWARDS: I'll echo that, Tessa. You're seeing Madina coming into her true self. I feel like, to be honest, all our players bring value when they come in. When they come in, they have huge impact minutes. Maryam with her rebounding, Adhel with her communication and leadership, Ta'Niya, doing the intangibles. I feel like every player on our team, we can say they're underrated, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes.

Q. Joyce and Madina have been such a great duo. How have you seen their partnership to flourish as the season goes on?

DAWN STALEY: I mean, it's growing every day. I mean, we knew that they had to build chemistry. They didn't play with each other for a long time. Joyce was not with us over the summer. They couldn't build that chemistry when the stakes weren't as high as they were today.

I think as coaches, we're real honest with our players. They have to play well together. Like, her and Madina, Joyce and Madina, have to play well together. Joyce and Ta'Niya have to play well together in order for us to reach our full potential as a team.

We can't just think it's going to magically happen. I think we have to be forceful, let them know, communicate that. There are things that we're missing, things we with get a little bit better. We had somewhat of a semblance of a high-low look, something we haven't had since we started doing it the last game. The games before that, there was no sense of high-low.

We're a high-low basketball team. We involve our post

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players a lot to be decision-makers. A high-low pass is one of those decisions that we didn't get much out of the two of them. We just start being calculating and making them do it with defense, without defense. Now we're starting to do it in the games.

Q. We see Raven being able to be impactful. For her in particular, where have you seen her growth so far?

DAWN STALEY: Well, I mean, for Raven's four previous years that she was with us, she had a core group of players that she could just kind of fall under the radar and not be that person that's on every day.

She has to be on every day because she's our most senior guard that really understands what the needs are of our program. She has to voice those things because our team is looking for her to do those things.

She's made a considerable effort to be more verbal. She's always one that has led by example. She's always one that worked hard in practice. So she's putting all those things together.

Q. Going up against Kara Lawson, a defensive-minded coach, how were you able to combat the pressure?

DAWN STALEY: I thought they played a little bit different than their pressure defense today. I thought they gapped us a little bit more than they normally do. We were actually expecting to be denied on the wings.

They allowed us to catch it. They went under ball screens. Just gave us room. We almost fell for the bait by taking just jump shot after jump shot after jump shot.

I thought it was a matter of time before we were able to see what they were giving us and understand if you can get by somebody, go. If you can't, kick it out. Let's try to get ahead of the possession.

It was a little surprising to see that they didn't come out in their normal pressure defense fashion.

Q. Ta'Niya is embracing her new role here. What has impressed you the most about her over the past month?

DAWN STALEY: Well, what's impressive is when you come in with the reputation of being our nation's leading scorer, you think about scoring. When you don't score, you think about scoring.

But she also knew that the reason why she was coming here. She probably knew that there would be some times

in which she would score 20, 25, 30 points. Sometimes she'll score, I don't know, 12 points.

What was striking about Ta'Niya is she's handling those things outwardly instead of inwardly. We talk about there are going to be some times when we need you to put the S on your chest and do Ta'Niya. There are going to be times in which you get a big performance like we had with Madina and Joyce. The S is still there. You just don't have to pull it out right now, okay?

Just being able to handle that. Then we always go back to the why. Why did you choose to come here? You chose to come here because you want to put yourself in a better position to play with players who -- I don't want to say this, I don't want to seem like I'm demeaning Florida State by any means, but we're a little bit different in that we have a number of players that have played at the highest level, played in Final Fours, won national championships. When you're around them, is just a different experience. She's handled that quite well. She's only going to grow.

I think she moved the needle as far as her moving up in the draft. Wherever they have her, she's moved up in the draft because this short period she defends, right? She's working on her counters to the things that she does extremely well. We're forcing her to do those things.

When you're in that situation and your team doesn't need you to score 30 points every night, you can work on some other aspects of your game, and she's doing that well.

Q. What is the first stat you look at when you get the box score after a game? Also, is there something you learned about your team so far?

DAWN STALEY: I look at turnovers, right? Then it probably jumps to points in the paint and the rebounding. I think those things all can win or lose you some basketball games.

You can win not shooting the ball well. You can win. If you're rebounding the basketball, right, you're not turning the ball over. You put yourself in that position to do that.

What was your second question?

Q. (No microphone.)

DAWN STALEY: They're finding their stride and their identity, right? Playing in a tournament like this where you know you're going to be challenged, you know teams are going to make adjustments, you got to figure out how you adjust in real-time. They're adjusting in real-time.

I want to say better than I was anticipating because I allow teams just to be who they are, then bring out the best in them. We just don't know. We only have, I don't know, six other games. Half of 'em are blowouts where you still want to just work on being disciplined in what you need to do while improving.

But when you play in big games like this, you kind of see the upward trajectory of where we can go.

Q. There's a proposal on the table for men's and women's basketball to move the transfer portal to 15 days and be after the Final Four. Your thoughts on that?

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, I think it's a good call. It's a good call. I mean, people know where they're going. It's an open market even when you're in the season. People are making calls. People are making decisions for the next opening of the transfer portal today in real-time.

I mean, it's weird, but that's the world we live in.

Since we've been in the Final Four the last couple of years, we haven't been able to just capitalize in it because we're playing so long into the season, we can't have 'em on campus during the times that people are having transfer portal-ese on campus. Let's not waste anybody's time. Leave it open for 30 days, you're going to be having players on your campus for 30 days. Doesn't bode well with the budget and all the things that come with that.

Q. You've added Susan Walvius to your staff. How did that come about, and what is her role going to be?

DAWN STALEY: I think it's a full-circle moment for Susan. Susan left South Carolina in 2008 when I came in. I mean, Susan was kind enough over the years to allow us to utilize her mentors. She had a mentoring program that I thought was terrific.

With enough time between when she left and I came, I was at South Carolina for a few years, we asked her would she mind us just kind of recycling her thought of having mentors. She was okay with that.

Then Susan is a successful businesswoman who created a corporation from the ground up that's still thriving in this space, in this climate. We like that. In this climate, you have to be business-minded. You have to think a little bit outside the box and be innovative and create positions that will help in the NIL space, that will help our players who are coming into a lot of money, that they need some direction. I think Susan was the best person for the job.

She's going to handle all of our NIL affairs, raise money, making sure we're giving our players financial literacy. If they wanted to start businesses, she's the person with the most experience to help them along the way.

Thank you.

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