

# GEICO Players Era Women's Championship

Wednesday, November 26, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

**Duke Blue Devils**

**Coach Kara Lawson**

**Taina Mair**

**Riley Nelson**

Women's Postgame Press Conference

South Carolina 83, Duke 66

KARA LAWSON: It was a challenging game for us. I thought South Carolina did a great job in the first half on the offensive glass. They had 11 offensive boards at halftime. Then we had 11 turnovers.

That second quarter where they were able to mount that lead going into halftime, that double-digit lead, it was on the backs of 22 extra possessions, and it was hard for us to box them out and limit them to one shot.

We were careless with the ball. They got going in transition. That margin we just weren't able to dig into too much in the second half. Obviously played 'em fairly even in the second half, but weren't able to get closer.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Either of the players, obviously been a little bit of a tough start to the season. How do you continue to grow as a team and to fight through the obstacles?**

TAINA MAIR: I would say just staying together. I mean, everybody on this team, everybody is a really good person on and off the court. We all know what we somewhere to do on the basketball court, what it takes to win. We're just going to continue to put time in the gym, continue to work. Everything for us is going to click eventually. We're just going to keep working on that.

RILEY NELSON: I'd say just continuing to work as hard as you possibly can. Every team is going to go through adversity. We're going to respond to it by giving our all every single game, yeah, go on from there.



**Q. There's a fine line between a will to win and a killer instinct. Everybody has a will to win. There's adversity throughout a game where it flips into having that killer instinct. Have y'all found that yet this season?**

RILEY NELSON: Yeah, I think we had moments where we had our killer instinct. I think we just need to continue working on kind of pushing through that killer instinct and having it longer throughout these games. Yeah, I do agree. We'll find that and we'll continue to grow that aspect of our games.

TAINA MAIR: Building off what Riley said, we've just got to hold it on for longer periods of time throughout the game. I thought we went on a little run through the fourth quarter. We've just got to continue to hold that run, be ourselves, and we're going to find that killer instinct within ourselves, and we're going to keep going.

**Q. South Carolina has a really solid 1-2 punch in the paint. How do you go about trying to slow them down?**

KARA LAWSON: I don't know that I'm the person to ask that. I don't know if I slowed 'em down.

The size of 11 is challenging. She's very strong and finishes well. We had a hard time with her size and strength, in particular on the offensive glass, but also the deep post positioning.

She made a couple nice plays in transition, in one on one. She's a very good player.

Joyce, I love Joyce. I had Joyce this summer, got to know her a little bit. She's just a wonderful player. Can impact the game in many ways. When she's hitting the jump shot like she was tonight, it's hard to guard her.

So yeah, I mean, I'm not big into, like, rankings or anything like that. They got to be one of the top front courts in the country when you look at the talent of the both of them together. They're really, really good, tough to defend.

**Q. Over the past few years you've talked about your scheduling philosophy, you want to play tough games.**

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**How do you feel this tough schedule has helped or hurt your team?**

KARA LAWSON: Yeah, I think it's low-hanging fruit. If you lose the games and you say it's bad, you win 'em, you say it's good, right?

We play these games to have things revealed. We want to be exposed. That gives us a framework to go back and practice and work on it.

Result is result. Would we like to have better ones than we have now? Yeah, sure. But we have a team that's growing, I think that's improving. That's going to be good.

For us, we get to play again tomorrow. You heard our players. That's not lip service. We talk about growth more than result. We talk about focusing on improvement. Over time if you're consistent with that, then I think results will come and start to go in your direction.

**Q. Last year's game against Oklahoma still resonates. It was a team that fine line of killer instinct. Would you agree on the fine line? Where is your team, head coach, to get them to grasp that? I don't know if you can teach that.**

KARA LAWSON: I mean, I like the team that I have. I like the players that I have. We return four of five starters from that team last year. There's a lot of wins in our locker room over the course of their careers, a lot of success. We have it inside of us. It's just about working out the new rotation.

We have some new players that we're integrating. I thought Riley was really good today. This is her first time playing with us. It's, what, seven games into the season for her.

I thought Arianna showed some flashes. She's just a freshman, but she's going to be really good.

Obviously we're without the services of Skinner. You may know her, may not know her. You'll remember her when she starts playing.

Those are the things that we keep growing, keep getting better. We're going to play a really good team tomorrow. I'm excited to see if we can take it a step further than we did today.

**Q. There's a proposal on the table for NCAA men's and women's basketball with the transfer portal, shorten the time frame to 15 days. It would open after the Final Fours. Your thoughts on that?**

KARA LAWSON: I don't really get into all that stuff. I just look at the rules. Whatever they say the rules are. There's people much smarter than me and more experienced in the governing of the sport. A little bit of a neophyte just being in my sixth year.

Whatever they decide, we'll go off of that.

**Q. You mentioned being without Skinner. Is there any update on her status?**

KARA LAWSON: I don't have an update or timetable. Just lower body injury.

Thank y'all.

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