

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship Final Four: Texas vs South Carolina

Friday, April 4, 2025

Tampa Bay, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Texas Longhorns
Coach Vic Schaefer
Rori Harmon
Taylor Jones
Shay Holle
Semifinal Postgame Media Conference



South Carolina - 74, Texas - 57

VIC SCHAEFER: Congratulations to South Carolina. I thought they played well today. They were tough. We always talk about toughness. The game honors toughness. I thought they were really tough today. And, so, congratulations to them.

You're never ready for today. I don't have the words. We have four special seniors. Three are up here with me. Shay has been with me every day that I've been at Texas, five years. Taylor has been here three. Rori's been here four. And Aaliyah Moore has been here four.

You're never prepared. I don't ever write notes down in case this happens because I don't want to speak it into existence. It always catches me off guard even after 40 years. But one thing I'll say about this group -- several things, but number one, man, what a blessing.

God blessed me with an incredible group of young ladies that have won 35 games. They're SEC champions. They went to the Final Four. They're just an incredible group of young ladies. It's hard for them for Taylor and Shay -- Rori has an option, but these two don't. It's the end of the road for them.

It's a hard day. You don't want it to end. You want to play on Sunday. But we ran into a good team today, and we didn't play that well. I think you can sum up our issues today with a nine-point third quarter. And we shot 31 and 28 percent in the second half.

And when Booker got in foul trouble in the first half, that seemed to be when things kind of changed a little bit. It is what it is.

But I couldn't be more proud of a group of young ladies. They have represented our university with integrity and class. Their commitment, each of these three -- if you were to come to a practice, you better get there an hour early because you're going to see all three of them.

Their commitment to being elite and being excellent and their commitment as teammates is really quite remarkable.

You know, y'all, as a coach and in recruiting, sometimes you can look and you go, well, I'll get another 2 guard or another 5 player or whatever. Sometimes you'll replace the position but you might not replace the person.

These kids right here are the best. I'm just a better coach, a better father, a better husband because I've been able to see them each and every day.

Again, not our best night tonight. But it wasn't because they weren't out there battling and trying. We lost to a better team tonight. And you have to give your opponent credit.

I'm very thankful for Shay and for Taylor, Rori, Aaliyah Moore -- again, Shay's been with me every day for the last five years. I don't know what it's going to be like walking in a gym next year and Shay Holle ain't in there. It might feel like death.

To have somebody that's been around -- I'll say it right now, I'm trying to convince her to stay on my staff, but she's so stinkin' smart -- she's got an undergrad in three in the McCombs School of Business and a Master's next year.

But Taylor came to us, she's coming off of several injuries at Oregon State. She's still battled those the first couple of years. But this year she has been as tough and as solid as a rock and has not whimpered one day.

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I've seen her grow. Her growth is going to allow her to have an opportunity to play long after today. I was telling her, I remember standing out in the parking lot up in Pennsylvania when she committed to me, and I was screaming and hollering like an idiot.

I'm sure people were driving by going, what's wrong with Coach? But you remember these things you know.

And Rori, I recruited so hard when I was at Mississippi State. She's got an option. She has a chance to do some different things. We'll kind of wait and see what that looks like.

It's a bittersweet day for all of us, but awfully proud of this team. Again, I think everybody at University of Texas, especially me, we're grateful for these young ladies and what they've done for our program and our university. They've all been so positive and we're better off for them.

Q. Jordan Lee, coming through when Madison had foul trouble, had seven of them, just take me through what you saw from her?

SHAY HOLLE: Jordan has done that for us all season. She makes big shots. I think it's just a product of the work she puts in. He says we're in there an hour early. So is she. She gets shots up every single day. And she made some really big ones, some timely my ones today. She's done it in other games.

She's a good shooter. She just puts in the work and she deserves a moment like this. She always performs no matter how big the stage. She has a bright future ahead of her for sure.

Q. As you figure out what it is you want to do, what goes into that thought process, how do you figure out -- you managed to return from injury and in an incredible way and ahead of schedule? As you're thinking about this as it even evolved over the past few months as you physically felt different.

RORI HARMON: You're not putting me on the spot. That's okay. I've been getting asked this quite a bit.

I had to think about what was important in the moment, and that was like what these people around me deserve is like my full attention, 100 percent effort.

But, yeah, it's a family decision, family thing to talk about. I've got to really hone in on that, but that's not anything I want to tell to the public right now. Appreciate that. Thank you.

Q. Shay, you're leaving college as the winningest player to ever wear the burnt orange. How proud are you to have brought this team to the Final Four? And how would you sum up your career at Texas?

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I think like Coach said, it's been such a blessing being on this team. Like that's the best word for it is just a blessing because not only are they obviously incredible basketball players but just all of them are such good people and such good friends to me. And they'll always be that and I'll always be there for them.

But I couldn't have asked for a better last year, going to the Final Four with Coach Schaefer and this group and just seeing the work we put in every single day and just the program that he's built since five years ago. It's crazy to look back on, definitely a weird feeling today. But just a blessing overall. All these five years I'm super grateful for it.

Q. Shay and Rori, as leaders of this program, you have four losses all season. Three came to South Carolina. I mean they're a borderline dynasty. How close are you guys to -- you beat them once, but what is the difference, do you think, in the two programs? And how close are you guys to getting to where you do beat these guys more than they beat you?

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, coming in this is the first year in the SEC being able to to be co-champs with them of the conference, that's not a small thing to do -- go 15-1 in the league, the toughest league. And I think this group has really shown a lot of growth through that.

I mean, you end up playing this team four times and they're really good and really talented, like Coach Schaefer said. You have to give them credit.

But we also know what we're capable of, and we're definitely not satisfied with that at all. And I think this team has, under Coach Schaefer, all of his teams have the potential to get here every single year and make it to Sunday. I think obviously we're on the right track.

We've had a really, really good season. Yeah, those three games being to them, I wouldn't let it define us at all.

RORI HARMON: What she said. I'm sitting here realizing we lost four games this season and we only lost to two people, two teams. Obviously give credit to South Carolina and the other team that beat us.

But like Shay said, we're 35-4 and we lost to two teams. So that in itself just shows how hard we can push and how great we are through adversity as a team. It just shows our

passion for the game of basketball and just our passion for each other.

Q. We all know the last place you want to be right now is up there. Thank you for coming out. Taylor, what's the one positive memory you're going to have from this season?

TAYLOR JONES: There's definitely more than one, but, I mean, I would say making it to the Final Four. This is something that I have never done and that no one on our team has done player-wise.

I think that although we could say that we ended the season on a sour note, but it was an extremely fun year.

Winning games, of course, makes it extra fun, but just being a part of this team and this group of girls, I think we just got along so well. And we always just had so much fun.

I would say just being with each other because at the end of the day I think it comes down to the relationships that you have with the people around you.

Words can't describe how thankful I am to be a part of this team and to be surrounded by just amazing people, people that always want to see you succeed. And I think everyone, like, teammate, support staff, everyone at the University of Texas since I've been here has wanted to help me succeed and has always invested so much into my career and how I would not be where I'm at if it wasn't for every single person I've come in contact with at the University of Texas. And I'm forever grateful for them trusting me and allowing me to be here.

Q. Rori, in the third quarter, what do you think went wrong for you all out there?

RORI HARMON: We only scored nine points and they scored 20. So that's kind of what went wrong. But we let their run accumulate. That's kind of what we talked about not doing. So I think it was just a bad quarter, like it was the last game. It was just one quarter that we couldn't put together.

But, yeah, I'm not even going to lie to you, I don't remember exactly what happened in the third quarter. I'm just looking at the score. But we couldn't get enough stops. We could score a few times but we just couldn't get enough stops.

Q. Shay and Taylor, when Texas breaks through and wins it all, how much pride will you guys take in knowing that you were the first to get Coach Schaefer

to a Final Four here in Texas?

SHAY HOLLE: I'll be in the stands when that happens for sure. I want to witness that. But I always have a lot of pride in being a Longhorn. Longhorn for life for sure.

And getting to be under Coach Schaefer all my five years here has been so special. And I can't wait to see him reach that goal because I know it will happen. And I'll make sure to be in person when it happens, too.

TAYLOR JONES: I think she said it all. I, of course, hope that I'll be able to be in the stands too.

I would have a lot of respect for them because I would know how hard it was to get here. So, how hard it would be to win it all, I mean, I can't wait to see that day.

Q. When Madison got her second and third foul with like 21 seconds, how much did that emotionally deflate the team? And do you feel like that shifted your team's confidence?

RORI HARMON: It's a game of basketball. It was a rough game, a physical game. Of course, we wouldn't want that in the situation, someone we go to a lot offensively.

Yeah, it kind of did start there. We were a little shook up a little bit. But we've got to be able to learn how to bounce back from that. We kind of did a little bit.

But like I said, the third quarter really was the burner.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. When Madison picked up that first foul early on, did you think at all about pulling her? And how much did her foul trouble hurt you all in the first half?

VIC SCHAEFER: I didn't think about it at all. You watched us last year. She knows how to navigate that. The second one came pretty quick. Again, I think when you get that first one, you've got to understand you certainly can't get the second one. You sure can't get it 22 seconds later, however many seconds it was.

So that was a big swing, for sure, right there. But it's part of the game. And, again, still I got a lot of trust and confidence in her that she won't get the next one.

So I didn't think the one on the sideline was a foul. If you're going to go off of that and allow everything else that happened in the game, it's not it. But it is what it is. It was right in front of me.

Q. I know Shay's been with you since you came to Texas. She came to Texas at the same time. She's gone to the Elite Eight with you and made it to the Final Four with you. What's it like to have a player like Shay on your team?

VIC SCHAEFER: When you get into coaching, you deal with a lot of different people. When you have a group of young ladies on your team, whether it's 12 or 15 or anything in between, everybody's got a different personality.

Shay Holle has been a rock. She's as consistent as any kid I've ever coached. All she's done is help us win. We've been to three Elite Eights plus a Final Four. So four Elite Eights that turned into a Final Four.

She's won four conference championships. She's the all-time leading winner in basketball, male or female, in the history of the school.

When you coach a bunch of different personalities, when you get the one that every day doesn't have a bad day, walks into the gym with a smile on their face, never has an excuse or a cop-out, is accountability for everything and anything, wants to please, never asks why, how come, you don't forget those kind of kids.

The thing is, as great as she's been for me to coach, I know she's been equally as good as a teammate. If you ask our kids, you get a phone call in three in the morning, you can't call Coach, who are you calling? Probably Shay Holle.

They better call me. But if it's a player, it's probably Shay. The kid's a winner. She's a great kid. Her parents are incredible people. There's not enough time in the day for me to rave about her.

It's going to be hard. It's going to be hard walking in the gym and not seeing her. She's probably the most athletic kid on our team.

We're on the track in August and September. I'm always worried the track coach is going to come out there because he's going to get her to be a heptathlete because she's unbelievable, off the chart athletic.

She's the fastest kid on our team. You don't want to get in a race with her. I don't care if it's a 50, 100, 220, 400 or mile, she's going to win it and make you look bad. She's special.

Other people recognize it. You might be surprised. I'm not. But I've had phone calls from people in the league

asking me about her. Most unassuming, but again people in the league, you've got so many people that need the ball. She don't need the ball. She'll be a great teammate. She'll do whatever it takes to win. And she'll help you win.

Q. As much as this one stings right now, how bright is the future for this team having players like Bree and Jordan who played so well tonight? And just what does this experience mean for you to have players like that coming back next year?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, it does sting. It's crappy. But the kids put it best. We lost four games to two teams this year. Tell me when that's ever happened. That's hard to do, lose four games to two teams.

But, again, I think it shows my staff's done a great job. We've done a great job evaluating kids in recruiting. Those kids have been impact kids all year long, both Bree and Jordan.

You have those two. You've got Madison. That's three young kids that are really, really special.

It won't be easier tonight or tomorrow but it will be easier knowing them three are around. They are competitors. And, again, they're kids that invest in their craft.

We talk about it all the time. The game's real fair. You get out of it what you put into it. Those three put a lot into it.

I'm excited about those three. You win with guard play. That's three pretty good ones.

Q. You've seen this team, like they said, four times. You pretty much know everything that's going to happen. Do you think there was any difference today that was outside of a defensive -- did they do anything different?

VIC SCHAEFER: You know, we got off to such a great start offensively, and yet we got off to a miserable start defensively, in my mind. I'll give you some examples.

4-5 switches, that ain't hard; 3-4 switches, it's not that hard. I bet we screwed up every one of them today.

And that shows, I'm a coach, so I pay attention to little things like that. That tells me we're not really focused. For whatever reason. It is what it is.

And, again, the kids know I'm going to call that toughness or lack of. That's the mental piece, right?

So it was frustrating for me to have the most -- because I

take that personal. Looks like you ain't been coached a day in your life. I'm over there beating my head on the wall, like, where did I fail that we can't get the most basic 4-5/3-4 switch?

It's just disappointing, but it's focus. You can hear all the people out there. We've been in front of a lot of people this year, but it's the biggest stage you can be on.

We had some other really easy things that aren't that hard for us that we've handled all year that we didn't handle tonight. It's kids. I'm in the kid business, you know?

Just for whatever reason we didn't handle some things tonight defensively that they know I take great pride in and we've been good at all year long. Again, I wear that responsibility. At the end of the day, obviously I didn't convey to them what we were doing and the importance of doing it. And so I've got to be better.

Q. I believe you made the most telling statement in your opening statements: I can replace the position; I can't replace the player. How many of those intangibles are you going to be having to replace?

VIC SCHAEFER: With this one right here (referring to Shay), she's got the total package. You're looking at somebody that's going to be a CEO and a president of somebody's company. I don't know who is out there, but this is who you want. This is who you want running your show.

When you start talking about those kinds of things and who these kids are, this one, that one, I mean, they all have so many intangibles that for, for one, life's hard. They're so competitive. All three of them are just incredible competitors. They came over there at a couple timeouts. They didn't like the way things were going either. Just like the coach.

It is hard to -- people think all the time, well, you go get another player. You do. There's players out there. There's a million of them in the portal right now.

It's just, like, I learned early in my young adult, you can get rid of the preacher, they'll find another preacher to come preach on Sunday. It's going to be real hard to replace the man sometimes.

Coaching, it's the same thing. You can go recruit other players and get other kids, but sometimes, when you have kids like this, sometimes it's hard to replace the kid.

For me, again, it really makes me appreciate this group. I had some really great kids, but I had some tough kids,

man, competitors. It wasn't our day today. But, again, you have to give credit to your opponent. They had something to do with it.

Q. You often hear that you grow more from losses than you do from wins. I know it's really soon after this particular loss, but how do you feel like you grew from other Final Four losses? And what do you hope that your players can take from this?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, part of my daily devotional today was sometimes it's not your time. We all think we have a plan and we have this great master calendar and it's going to be on our time. But sometimes it ain't on our time; it's on His time.

God's got a plan. I'm going to have to have a conversation with him because I've had my heart broke now a couple two or three times in these deals.

I don't know how much you can grow when Ogunbowale throws one off the wall from 35 feet. Hard to grow from that one.

But I choose to look at the blessing of being here, the blessing of being able to be with this group each and every day and coach them and be around them. And they impacted my life, too.

You can be impatient in life. I'm a "why" guy. I've lost both of my parents and in both situations I'm, like, why. You're not supposed to be a why guy but that's your flesh.

I'm a little bit why-ish right now about how we could play today in a way that we haven't played this way in a while. We haven't played like this today. But at the end of the day I think you've got to stay grounded in your faith.

I know there's a bigger plan. I'm not real fond of it right now, but I know there's a bigger plan, and I'm good with it.

I hate it for these kids. I hate it for these seniors that have given so much of their life to the University of Texas, to women's basketball. It's hard. It is.

You've all heard me say this. This is not a check for me. This is not what I do; this is who I am. And I want them to be the best they can possibly be. It's really difficult because I know they're good enough. Like, this team's good enough. We're good enough to play on Sunday, but, you know, we ran into a really good team today and they had a lot to do with why we didn't play very good.

I've had some experience. I've played them a lot. We've won some and lost some. But at the end of the day, I'm

really proud of these kids, and I'm appreciative of them. I appreciate what they've brought to my life and to our program.

I think if you can live with an attitude of gratitude and be appreciative of your circumstance, no matter what it is, again, I don't like my circumstance right now but it will get better. I'll wake up tomorrow and -- maybe not tomorrow -- but there will be a day.

But I do think this for sure, I told them this in there, after we wrote down all the positives and negatives on the board, there were plenty, at the end of the day they're co-Southeastern Conference champions in their first year, went 35-4 and went to the Final Four. One game does not define this team.

I want them to hang their hat on that. Their ring is not only going to say SEC champions, it's going to say Final Four. It's hard to do, y'all. Winning's really hard. People think it's easy until it ain't.

I really appreciate everybody here. The city's been great. Tampa's been great. I neglected to thank the city of Birmingham last week, and I hate that. So I'm going to thank them here as well for everything they did for us in the regional.

Really appreciate the room, what you do for our great game. I know some of you have been around a long time, you've invested your career in the game. I just want you to know, from somebody who has lived it, I appreciate y'all's time and your coverage of our kids.

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