

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Tennessee Tech vs South Carolina

Friday, March 21, 2025

Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Colonial Life Arena

**South Carolina Gamecocks**

**Coach Dawn Staley**

**Adhel Tac**

**Joyce Edwards**

Media Conference

South Carolina 108, Tennessee Tech 48

THE MODERATOR: Our next team in is South Carolina. Coach, if you would please make your opening statement.

DAWN STALEY: Just congratulations to Tennessee Tech playing in the NCAA Tournament, playing their hearts out. They're a very well-coached basketball team.

Fortunately for us our team did what they needed to do, took care of business to advance. I'm proud of them for that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Adhel, you get to come in earlier than you normally do. Third quarter, and you get six points. How good did that feel, and how much do you think you'll be able to contribute to this tournament run going forward?**

ADHEL TAC: It felt pretty great, honestly. I didn't want to come into the game with any expectations. I just wanted to play my game, so I went into the quarter not expecting myself to do anything. Didn't have like a set number of how many points I wanted to make or anything. I just want to do play good basketball.

**Q. Joyce, your first NCAA game. Were there any nerves at all, anything different than you had shown all year long?**

JOYCE EDWARDS: I would say I'm nervous before every



game. You know, every game you come in, you don't really know what to expect, so once you get your first bucket or your first rebounds, the nerves settle down.

You know, just excited to play in the NCAA Tournament. You know, this is why we come here. Just making the most of my opportunity.

**Q. For both of you, this game you were up by 20 points at the end of the first quarter. What can you guys take out of a game like this where you are in control the whole way? Can you take some good things going forward?**

JOYCE EDWARDS: Just all about discipline, being focused, executing the game plan. You know, sometimes we get leads. Sometimes we lose our focus; they come back. I feel like that was our biggest thing coming in here is just staying focused and staying focused on our main goal.

ADHEL TAC: In a game like that where we're, like you said, being up 20 points early, it's important for us to practice good habits, not for the game that we're currently in, but for the down the line when the games get harder and we have tougher opponents. That's the thing that we have to work on the most.

**Q. This is for Adhel. You've quickly become kind of a fan favorite. I'm kind of curious, when you are checking into the scorer's table, do you notice the fans kind of get riled up and excited for you to come on the floor, or are you all focused in and ready for your matchup?**

ADHEL TAC: I do notice it. I'm really fortunate to play here at South Carolina. The atmosphere here, I believe, is unmatched, especially with the kind of fans we have and the culture we bring. It's always great to hear fans rallying behind us whenever we're in games.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach Staley.

**Q. It seemed early they pretty much packed**

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**themselves in the paint, tried to deny the interior. How do you think y'all handled it? There were a lot of turnovers early, but then it kind of calmed down.**

DAWN STALEY: It took us a little bit to adjust to it. I thought we knew it coming in the game. Actually executing is a little bit harder, so it took us a while to adjust.

I think once Paopao hit a couple of shots and Tessa hit a couple of threes, it loosened up just a little bit to where we were able to maneuver a little bit more normal than having so much help. They compacted so much. Once we hit shots from the outside, it felt a little normal after that.

**Q. What do you think you'll be able to take out of this going forward into Sunday against Indiana, a team that played you tight last year?**

DAWN STALEY: They hit the nail on the head when they said it's just being disciplined, playing good basketball because I've always said good basketball is contagious, bad basketball is contagious.

I hope we bring our ability to shoot the ball as well as we shot the ball. We shot the ball pretty good, and hopefully we can take that into the next game.

**Q. 22 points from the freshman, Joyce. Can you talk me through trusting her as the game went along and continuing to feed the hot hand that's playing in her first tournament game?**

DAWN STALEY: Joyce, she makes a lot of layups. She's very, very efficient making layups. Once you see that ball go in, whether it's a layup or a free-throw, you know, the basket gets big. I think her midrange was going as well.

Then her teammates really find her. She does a good job of sprinting the floor. She does a great job at making herself available and showing numbers to where she makes the guards' lives easier because her target is so big.

When she's converting and delivering, it's much easier to pass that ball to her.

**Q. Lisa Leslie being here, your former teammate and one of your best friends, what was it like seeing her? Were you able to talk to her? What's the bond like with her?**

DAWN STALEY: Lisa is great. Lisa is a person that's passionate about basketball. We've spent a lot of hotel nights as roommates. We absolutely love basketball. I'm going to pick her brain about some of the things that we need to do to continue to help our players, like Adhel and

Maryam and Joyce develop.

She is, I don't know, a four-time Olympian. I don't know how many MVPs, championships, gold medal. Any time you can have a resource like that, it's always great to have, especially when we get so many bigs that come through our program.

**Q. I was just wondering more about the process going into starting MiLaysia today, and obviously she's come off the bench all season. Was there any particular for today that fit into the game plan or anything?**

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, she came off the bench. She did.

**Q. Once again, back to Lisa being here. Were you able to talk to her at all? You mentioned she's been able to mentor a lot of the players that have come through here.**

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, I talked to her. She's staying at my house, so I saw her before the game (laughing). We'll talk a lot tonight when I get back home. I don't think we can get her. I might want to bring her to our film session at the hotel tonight, so I might be able to bring her there and just have her around our players to ask questions about how they can maximize this space in the NCAA Tournament and beyond.

**Q. Coach, short shifts tonight for your players. Walk me through the thought process of that. I know you want to get as many people in as you can to get good experience in the first round. Talk me through the short shifts, the hockey shifts?**

DAWN STALEY: I thought our starters didn't get off it a great start, didn't really get off to a great start in the third quarter. Just wasn't able to manufacture enough points.

I just wanted to see if our second unit could just jump-start our offense and jump-start our defense. We inserted them in the game. They made it happen. So it's nothing. You know, our starters are our starters, and it's nothing more than just trying to energize our team.

**Q. How is it watching Edwards and Fulwiley perform in their home state of South Carolina?**

DAWN STALEY: We've been great at cornering the South Carolina market. I mean, that was one of the things when we first took over here is to make sure that we hit every AAU coach, every high school coach to make sure that if they have any talent coming up through the pipeline, we're here.

To have, you know, players that are from here that represent this state is paramount that we have that. I think it makes us more valuable when we go out and try to bring more national talent to our program, but you know, charity begins at home. When we're able to get the top kids for South Carolina to stay home, it's always a great thing because they bring a great following.

We've watched them since they were in the sixth grade. We've watched them come to camp and win all the awards. So it's cool to see that process get to a point where they trust us enough to want to come here and spend their college years here getting ready for that next step in life.

**Q. Wearing the beads and the necklace and bracelets as usual, but you have the new chain around your neck. I saw that there's room for 2025 on there. How does the new chain feel? What's the story behind that?**

DAWN STALEY: I was gifted this by one of my friends, Plies. He's a great supporter of our program over the past couple of seasons, and I had no idea, but it's really nice. I mean, it's really nice. The detail, just all about the details. There's a scripture on the back. There's a picture on the back. It's a national championship trophy, so I like that. Hopefully it brings us good luck to get another one.

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