

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Indiana vs South Carolina

Saturday, March 22, 2025
Columbia, South Carolina, USA
Colonial Life Arena

South Carolina Gamecocks Coach Dawn Staley Te-Hina Paopao Raven Johnson

Media Conference

DAWN STALEY: Super excited to play Indiana tomorrow. I know it's going to be a tough matchup. Teri always has her teams ready to rock and roll and competing for 40 minutes.

Our team is up for the challenge, so we're excited to play here tomorrow afternoon.

Q. You mentioned getting to play Sydney again. What were some of the memories of playing with her?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Good and bad memories at Oregon. It was always fun with her and the squad I was with. It's a full circle moment. Started at Oregon and now going to end our career here at our schools.

So excited to get it going and see her tomorrow. It'll be a rematch and going to be really fun.

Q. For each of you, what sticks out about that game Indiana played last year against you in Albany and how close that got in the fourth quarter? Anything you can take from that into this year?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Well, we keep talking about the halftime dance routine we had with Raven and Kamilla and we were up big in this game. This year we have to be more disciplined. Just be able to keep the mindset that we got to stay in all 40 minutes and continue to be here we are.

RAVEN JOHNSON: What she said. Keeping the main thing the main thing.



Q. For both of you, how different does Indiana look this year compared with last year?

RAVEN JOHNSON: I mean, they made it to the next round, so they got to be somewhat type of good. We got to bring our A game and just be us.

TE-HINA PAOPAO: You know, they obviously had a dominant post last year, as we did. We're two different teams this year. So I mean, we still have a dominant post as well, but we just got to play our game and continue to be who we are and be disciplined throughout the 40 minutes that we play.

Q. Obviously Coach Staley has built up South Carolina's program immensely the past few years. What's it like playing on a team in such a monumental time?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: It's great. You got to enjoy the process, good and the bad, ups and downs. But you still got to be consistent and look to your teammates.

It's a family atmosphere and culture that I love, I trust, and have so much confidence in, so it's been really fun. I'm blessed and fortunate to be able to be part of this program.

RAVEN JOHNSON: Pretty much what she said. It's a winning culture. When you come here all you think about is all the trophies they have so we just want to add to it, honestly.

Q. Yesterday on the Podcast Raven said she likes giving gifts better than receiving. I feel like that translates pretty well to who she is as a point guard. Could you talk about what it's like having her on the court in this critical time and how selfless she is setting up teammates for baskets?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Yeah, I love Ray Ball. She's such a wonderful person to be with, wonderful person to play with. She's not only a great woman on the court, but off the court. She's very selfless, very genuine. It's all love for her. She just wants us to be great. It's great to see when you have a point guard like that.



You want to run through a brick wall for her. It's something we all love and cherish about her, her fun spirit. She does a really good job balancing both things. Just a great player, great person, and I just can't wait to see where her journey takes her.

Q. For either of you, the guards had one of the best games of the season yesterday. Chemistry is high in the unit. How do you keep the momentum rolling through the next game and tournament?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: Yeah, no, it felt really good to see the ball go through the net, especially for us guards. We haven't been shooting particularly well.

So seeing the ball go through yesterday for our first game out in the tournament, it's a great sight to see and a great feel to the game that we're going to have.

Just got to stay locked in in practice. That's where everything starts it and we just got to translate what we practice to the game.

RAVEN JOHNSON: Yeah, what Te-Hina said.

Q. I know you just touched on it a little bit, but have you and Sydney Parrish stayed in touch?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: For sure. We have a really good relationship. I've always wanted to see her be successful and great. It's really cool to see, like you said, full circle moment to see each other again and compete against each other one more time.

Q. Te-Hina I noticed you're wearing your hat from last year. Any significance to that?

TE-HINA PAOPAO: No. Just have a bad hair day. Even though I've been wearing it ever since we started the tournament.

Q. Just to clarify, Sydney had an and-one and you guys were scouting that game. Was she yelling to you, shouting to you or...

TE-HINA PAOPAO: I think she got the and-one. When you get an extra one you are very competitive and so you just yell, and then she spotted me and we start laughing and giggling. It was like a friendship kind of moment type of thing.

Q. Dawn, my understanding that Lay likes to wear a fresh pair of sneakers every game. Two-part question: One, what does do with the old ones? And two, with

Innersole and you being a sneaker head yourself, do you talk to her about, hey, you got to clean that out every once in a while?

DAWN STALEY: I think she gives a lot of her sneakers away. She's such a shifty player that what she does in a pair of sneakers loosens them up. I was like that type where I needed a tight feel every time out.

I don't have the assortment of sneakers that she gets, so, no I don't know what she does with them. But we like new sneakers. We don't like gently worn sneakers at Innersole.

Q. You said yesterday that last year's game would be top of mind. How much do you emphasize what happened last year, fourth quarter and how close Indiana got to knocking you off, or is it just they know what needs to happen differently?

DAWN STALEY: It's a little bit of both. We just had a film session just a few minutes ago, and the first thing we discussed was what happened last year. Coach Boyer asked what happened last year, and then they had a mouthful.

So that's what we discussed. And, I mean, they don't -- they have the majority of the same team so if I'm them I'm looking at what happened last year to see if we made an adjustment and we can connect a little bit better defensively and communicate a little bit better defensively.

So we'll be prepared for it. Hopefully they won't knock down as many threes as they did in that fourth quarter to put us in a position where they fought back and we had to claw to get the win.

Q. Obviously you remember what it was like coaching your guys last year when they hadn't really fully accomplished things, were still learning. Did this game with Indiana last year, was that a little bit of an eye opener for them? Seemed like the rest of the tournament you guys were a lot crisp err and focused after that.

DAWN STALEY: I think in any run there will be challenges, some good and bad. I think with -- as I reflect on it, that was the challenge.

And I think Oregon State was a challenge for us as well. The same type of actions caused us some issues with people playing small ball and running our bigs off flair screens, something that's very difficult for any post player to guard.

So I mean, yes, I think it was a challenge and it's in our

minds that it's Indiana again. So hopefully we'll have a better outing and is finish 40 minutes of a basketball game.

Q. You mentioned last year your necklaces and the meaning behind them. Is it a similar story with your bracelets? Where do those come from and how many do you wear for the day?

DAWN STALEY: A lot. I mean, I just -- when young people give me the bracelets I just immediately put them on. And I think Feagin counted them. I think I'm up to 28. Doesn't look like 28.

Just people customize it for me and I figure I will wear them until they break.

Q. Yesterday he were talking to Raven about how hard it is to be a point guard, especially in March Madness. She was saying her and (garbled audio) have to be a mini you on the court. Talk about the mental perspective of a point guard and what goes into everything Raven has to do in March.

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, when you really think about it, if anything goes wrong on floor I blame the point guards. Anything, any kind of misconnect, miscommunication. And they could not have been involved in the interaction.

But they're the people that have to really communicate. You communicate in huddles, in live play in real time. You communicate on both sides of the basketball. You're the connector, the link to what needs to happen for us to execute.

But the work is done prior to March. It's done in the summer through now, and then it should just be par for the course when it comes to the type of situations we're in had. He's habit forming. It should come to a point where you probably aren't talking is a much because you're so efficient with what people need to do.

It could be a facial expression that really gets your teammates to understand what they need to do. So I think it's a cool dynamic. Once it gets to March, it shouldn't be as much work. Should be running as efficiently and as lean as possible.

Q. Going back to the bracelets and necklaces, any story you can share that stands out to you?

DAWN STALEY: The biggest story is, you know, two of the necklaces that I wear are from one person, a young lady, and her name is Blake Lee, who's going through cancer treatments.

I mean, gives me a perspective of, yes, we're preparing for a second round game. She's probably preparing for a second surgery or 22nd treatment. So helps give me perspective. The other one is a young man that I met here at the children's hospital who suffers from sickle cell.

So I had a cousin that passed from sickle cell, so gives me perspective on what we're doing, where we are, and really for us, although we think it's our world, our passion, what we do, it really is just basketball. When you put it in perspective of what other people have to go through.

Not just the young people that are stricken with those type of diseases. It breaks down an entire family. It changes your family. If I have siblings, every energy is going towards healing that sick sibling, that sick child.

So I some empathy for what they go through. If it helps me to stay empathetic, I'm going to wear them.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports