

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Samford vs Southern U.

Thursday, March 19, 2026  
Columbia, South Carolina, USA  
Colonial Life Arena

## Southern U. Jaguars Coach Carlos Funchess DeMya Porter Jaylia Reed

Media Conference

Southern 65, Samford 53

CARLOS FUNCHESS: I thought the young ladies came out and played extremely hard. I thought we were a little antsy at the beginning of the game and did some things that was uncharacteristic of our team. But we settled down. I thought in that second quarter we did a solid job of getting some good shots. I see we scored 16 points, but we took good shots.

I thought the first half, again, we were a little jittery, but we straightened it out and did a good job, especially defensively and on the boards. I knew it was going to be a battle. They do a lot of ball screen motions and handoffs and things like that and they have some great shooters. Hats off to them for being a great team.

**Q. This can be for either Porter or Reed. How important was it scoring 14 points off turnovers and you guys forced several turnovers as well.**

DeMYA PORTER: We knew that they weren't really used to the ball pressure that we played with, so we knew that we had to take advantage of them not being used to the game that we play, and we know that if we turn over the ball, we have to always advance off of that and take advantage and try to do our best to win.

**Q. What was the key in that fourth quarter, that run? They were hitting a bunch of threes. What was the key in that fourth quarter defensively for you to slow them down?**

JAYLIA REED: I think just being aggressive on defense



and getting -- making them uncomfortable. We know they can shoot pretty well, so we just have to run them off the three-point line, make them do something they're not used to, and that's really putting the ball on the floor, and we know defense is our motto.

**Q. Jaylia, obviously when you came to Southern you had a reputation for shooting the ball. You were an outstanding shooter. How challenging, or if it was challenging at all to buy into the defensive concept of southern basketball just fitting with the program?**

JAYLIA REED: I'd say it took me a little minute, but I knew coming over here with the standard was. I played against them, so I kind of knew what it was like because they did it to me for two years so I knew how it felt. I knew I wanted to be a part of something and be a piece to the puzzle.

**Q. DeMya, you outscored them 14-2 down the stretch. Obviously you've all been in a lot of close games this year. When it was 51-51, what was the conversation like? Was it just keep playing or find a way and our defense will eventually find the key to win?**

DeMYA PORTER: The conversation is always keep playing hard, don't let the score be a factor of how you play. Don't be nervous, don't be anxious. You just always have to go out there and play with your whole heart, play great, don't think about what ifs, what's going to happen next. Think about what's in the present and what you can do to affect the future.

**Q. You guys scored 34 points in the paint. It looked like it was key to your win today. Can you share more how successful that was and how you're going to use that against South Carolina to also be successful in the paint?**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, I don't know how we're going to use it against South Carolina, but we wanted to drive the basketball and try to get some easy buckets. I thought Mykayla Cunningham did a great job, especially down the stretch, driving, drawing. She dropped a couple passes off to DeMya that kind of broke the game open. Defensively if you apply that kind of pressure all night it's going to affect



you. Even if you're a shooter, like they have knock down shooters, but the ball pressure, wearing them down, I thought really took affect late in the game.

**Q. Just your thoughts on facing South Carolina and the program. You guys played a lot of Power Four teams this year, but getting a chance to face them here in the tournament?**

JAYLIA REED: I think it'll be a great experience for us. Of course we know South Carolina, who they are. We all are fans of them, actually. But we know we're going to come out here and play our best and we're going to represent who we are.

DeMYA PORTER: Yeah, I'm excited for the opportunity, the chance to get to play in front of -- with some good competition and in front of a lot of people. Yeah, I'm just ready for that.

**Q. Coach, if you can talk about the way the defense stepped up tonight.**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, that was going to be a big key to us having victory tonight. Just ball pressure. Just wear the shooters down. They do a tremendous job running their offense and they're hard to guard. Again, they have some knock-down shooters, the leading three-point maker in the country. You don't play against players like that often, but we did a really good job of switching out defenders on her and making it tough. I think she ended up with, like, 16 points or so. But that was a tough 16. Hopefully she'll be tired tonight.

**Q. What does this mean for the program, two straight years winning an NCAA Tournament game, and just your thoughts on that and then also facing South Carolina on Saturday?**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, I mean, it's tremendous, not just for our program but for our conference. We have some really good basketball players in our conference and some really good coaches. Our league is tough. We went on the road this year and won a couple of Power Four games. We beat Arizona, we beat University of Houston, and then we ended our conference season and we went 12-6. So that just shows you the talent that's in our league. If you're not playing at your best each and every night, anybody is capable of beating you.

Now, when it comes to South Carolina, of course we've just got to go out and compete and play our game and try to do the best that we can. But I'm so proud of these young ladies to make it to this point. We had to overcome a lot of adversity, but I love my kids, and they came out and they're

going to give you 100 percent every night, regardless if it's good or bad.

**Q. During the game I noticed that your assistant coach Jeremy was very vocal to the girls during the game, very vocal guy for you. Can you share with me how key he is to get them excited, get them going?**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: He's a big kid. He's my defensive coordinator. Of course we sit down and look at what we're going to do. But he comes up with the defensive game plan. We try to take away other teams' strengths and try to make them play to their weaknesses and things like that.

But he's one of the best in the country, no doubt about it. He's passionate about what he does, and the girls know it, as well.

**Q. I just wanted to follow up on Jaylia. Obviously she had a great offensive game tonight, but for your program you've got to play defense. What was that challenge like for her coming in and becoming more defensive minded for you?**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, I always knew that she was quick enough to be able to push up and go at the basketball. As the year went on, she knew that's what she had to do really to get a lot of playing time, a lot more playing time, and she did that. She turned out to be one of our best defenders, without a doubt.

But I mean, she's just selfless. Some games she only took one or two shots. Some games she would score 16 or 17 points. Whatever it took to win, that's what she was willing to do, and thank goodness we have her.

**Q. Honestly, what D'Shantae did tonight is not a surprise to you. How important was it for you to see her set the tone early with the early steals in the first few minutes of the game?**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: I mean, she's going to come out, she's tough as nails, she's guarded some of the best players in the country, and that's a challenge to her. She's our defensive stopper now. She might not take a shot in some games, but she's going to push up and she's going to guard and she's going to disrupt, and she's really physical. The only thing I was worried about with her was were the officials going to let her play physical, and they let us bump them a little bit and things like that, and that was to our advantage.

She did a remarkable job.

**Q. Your bench scored 20 points tonight. Can you**

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**expand on that and how key that was to your success?**

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, we always have a strong bench. As a matter of fact, the last, I think, two games our bench outscored our starters. We're a little bit better offensively when we go to the bench, not as strong defensively, but that's not unexpected.

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