

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Southern California vs Clemson

Saturday, March 21, 2026
Columbia, South Carolina, USA
Colonial Life Arena

Southern California Trojans Coach Lindsay Gottlieb Jazzy Davidson Kara Dunn

Media Conference

USC 71, Clemson 67

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with the Southern Cal Trojans, represented by Head Coach Lindsey Gottlieb and student-athletes Jazzy Dunn and Kara Dunn, who combined for 53 of the 71 points today.

Coach, if you would please make an opening statement.

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: That was a great NCAA Tournament game. First off, just the work that Coach Poppie has done at Clemson to get them back in the tournament. We knew they were a really good team. We knew it was going to be a battle. They had a heck of a season. So I want to congratulate them on that. I know they'll be back.

For us, it was a culture win. We played our tails off on defense pretty much the whole game. They made some plays here and there. They're a really good team.

The turning point was when we decided we're not going to let the other end happen to us. We're not going to just take any shot. We're going to get the shots we want. We started to turn a really good defense into shot creation and shot making. That was the difference for us.

I'm just really proud. These two up here probably need an ice bath, but it's the way they approach the game. It's the way they approach their teammates. They're always locked in. I wasn't surprised they made big critical plays down the stretch. I loved their energy from everyone on the bench to on the court. It's a big culture win, and we're excited to be still playing.



THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Can you both walk us through what it's like to see the final shot and think maybe the season's over to do an instant reset and have to go into overtime.

JAZZY DAVIDSON: That's just a tough shot. Those are the kinds of things that happen in March. Obviously, none of us want our season to be over so it's a little crushing to see that. But when we found out we were going into overtime, just a mental reset. We came back together and were ready to play the next five minutes together.

KARA DUNN: I feel like Jazzy said it best. During that, no one kind of started completely getting mad at each other, pointing fingers. I felt like we stayed together. We stayed locked in. When we heard it was overtime, we said we don't get second chances in life so we need to take advantage of that. I felt like we did.

Q. Kara, I think it was you before this game that said it was going to be passion versus passion. How did you see this team's passion manifest in that overtime period?

KARA DUNN: I felt like exactly what I said. Clemson played with a lot of passion. They always do. I felt like we absolutely met that, and I felt like we surpassed it in the end.

We were playing for each other. We made the changes we needed to make, and we didn't repeat the same mistakes we had probably in the past. I really felt like we came together, and I really hope we use it in the next game.

Q. Jazzy, how does it feel in your first NCAA Tournament game to hit the game-tying shot and then the shot that put you guys up for good in overtime. That seemed special. Doesn't happen to too many people.

JAZZY DAVIDSON: Yeah, it felt great. My teammates and coaches put me in a great position with those shots. They called great play calls, and my teammates executed



perfectly, and we got the shot so it was great.

Q. Kara, what were thoughts on watching Jazzy today and her performance, especially after those two big shots in overtime?

KARA DUNN: I literally told her you don't ever have to get me a gift ever again because those two shots in overtime were enough. I'm really proud of her, her maturity. Her confidence to step up and take the shots was huge for us. Proud of you, Jazz.

JAZZY DAVIDSON: Thank you, Kara.

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: I'm not supposed to speak at this time, but you never need to get me a gift. I called a time-out when we had a lay-up. We ran an out of bounds play, and she got an and 1. So you're good on that too.

JAZZY DAVIDSON: Thanks.

Q. With this being a culture win, what do you think the country learned about USC's culture today?

JAZZY DAVIDSON: I think our grit. We play with a lot of grit and heart. When we're clicking, that can be scary for a lot of teams. I'm excited to go into the next game and build off of it.

KARA DUNN: Absolutely.

Q. Jazzy, how does it feel to get another shot at South Carolina?

JAZZY DAVIDSON: It's exciting. They're a great team. They're super well coached. To be able to get another shot at them and see where we stack up again way later on in the season, it's going to be a good game.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, congratulations.

JAZZY DAVIDSON: Thank you.

KARA DUNN: Thank you all.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open up for questions for coach Gottlieb.

Q. Lindsay, those few minutes from the end of -- I mean, even before we got the Mia Moore shot, the back and forth on the tie-ups and who had the ball and this and that, did you get a good explanation about Mia's shot? And then how did you get your team to reset mentally after watching them celebrate a little bit?

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: I mean, you think about someone like Kara Dunn, right, and that emotion of you think your college career might be over to then having to go play overtime, it's pretty unreal.

For me, I trust our video person, Rex Greabell, like, with like everything. I look at him, are we challenging or not? Right away, I looked at him and said, did they get it off on time? He said, I don't think so.

That was the first thing. Then the foul situation. So if they'd have called a foul on the ground prior to the shot and it was before time expiring, they were going to go to the free-throw line.

During that time, we tried to get our kids ready to say, number one, this might be going to overtime. Number two, they might have a free throw. If they do, we were trying to draw something up because we didn't have time-outs. If, by change, they get a free throw, what are we doing after that.

Obviously, I was trying to trust what the video was saying. Obviously, from my end, the officials did a great job going to the monitor, and they counted down the time from the 4.4 seconds. She didn't get it off in time. If that's accurate, then that's what it is, and we knew we had to get ready to go to overtime.

Q. Coach Gottlieb, just Jazzy's performance. A freshman, she's obviously big-time Freshman of the Year, all the accolades. To have that performance especially late in the game, the steals were able to set you up for the game-tying basket in regulation.

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: I mean, I'm running of adjectives, right? She's a really, really special player in the fact that -- forget freshman, right? She's a special player in all the ways that she impacts a game.

There's just different things and why people get accolades and stuff. I'm not really interested in that. A lot of teams, people are like, okay, you have to be on the best team in the country to get this or that.

My thing is look how much she's growing in a role for us where she's relied upon to do all those things for us to win a game in a big-time close game. I think she impacts both sides of the floor. Three steals, one block. Deflections, probably way more than that.

We ask her to make big shots. We ask her to assist passes, play a ton of minutes. She's a really, really just a special basketball player and a really good teammate. I think you see that with the chemistry of the team, that she

hasn't come in here and disconnected us. She's come in here and connected us, and I think you saw that on display today. We needed every ounce of it.

Q. Kennedy plays with so much passion and was in foul trouble for the last couple minutes. How did you coach her threw the last few minutes of the game?

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: She's just a huge part of everything we do on every part of the floor too, right? So she's kind of our assist like trigger man in getting Jazzy and KD and whatever we're looking for. We put her tough defense assignments on her all the time. We literally thought about having her on the 5 player or the point guard or the wing. She can do it all.

To have her get a fourth foul kind of early, I believe in playing kids with fouls as long as you can because the analytics, why am I sitting them to possibly sit them later. With four is tough in the third quarter. I rolled with her really early, six, seven minutes or something. She's a terrific all-around player. She's also very, very cerebral and very smart so you can trust her to defend without fouling for the most part.

So we needed her. I thought we got good minutes when she was on the bench. We got good things going. Other people contributed, but obviously we were going to roll with her down the stretch.

Q. Coach, even beyond that first shot, it was a punch game, punch back and forth game. How did you feel your bench and team responded in breaks and time-outs? Were they ever stressed, angry, frustrated?

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: No. I was angry at one point because I felt like we had to make a change on the offensive end, right? There's times at which good shots don't fall, right? But I thought we were settling and not taking good shots. And so, I mean, I look now, and I'm 13, 13. Of course, credit Clemson and their defense, but that's like -- you know, you want to get to the shots you want.

So I got after them and said, look, we're playing our tails off on defense, but let's do something different here on the offensive end. So I thought they really responded. I thought that was probably what I'm most proud of, their ability to manufacture better offense at that point. That was the difference in the game.

I don't think shots magically started going in. I thought we were a little more assertive with getting to what we wanted. We ran some actions that we really executed well. I think a couple got Jazzy looks, and a couple -- KD hit the 3 and

we ran the same thing out of a time-out and she got to the rim and got the and 1.

I thought we executed better. Really, their mentality. Took the hard coaching and said let's make a change and be better. I thought we played really hard the whole game. I just thought we had to get more discipline on the offensive end.

Q. You get the rematch with South Carolina. How far has the team come since the last time you played them?

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: We've come a long way. We've gone through a lot of, like, ups and downs of the season and developed as a team. So have they. So it's a huge challenge in front of us, but I think we're excited to still be playing and excited to take our shot as one of the nation's best teams.

Who wouldn't want that? In particular, having played them already, it can hopefully give us some film to say, okay, we know we're capable of this. We also know we need to do this better. So I know we're not afraid of a fight. We've played an incredibly difficult schedule. We played them, we played UConn, we played UCLA multiple times so we know to beat a top tier team, it's going to take a top tier effort.

Q. Mia Moore had the huge shot we'll always remember. Up until the fourth quarter, I don't think she scored a point. So what was your mindset defensively? What was the game plan or scout for her?

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: We wanted to limit their 3s, and then we knew if you limit their 3s, they go to their more isolated situations, like either with the bigs or with Moore.

So we actually really limited the 3s of the shooters, like of the guards. Augustinaite and Kohn, right, didn't make 3s. But obviously their bigs, Thompson hit a couple and 10 played really well, Johnson-Matthews.

And then they tried to, I think, go to their playmakers down the stretch who could do different things. And that's where we do have really good perimeter defenders, Kennedy, Jazzy, Malia, where we try to make it tough on people. If you have to go to tough 2s, hopefully they're tougher than your average tough 2s. I think we did a great job on the defensive end.

She's an excellent player, orchestrates a lot of what they do. She had six assists. We tried to make her life tough.

Question for you guys. I know there are Clemson fans and then USC fans. You said South Carolina fans would be cheering for us. Were they? Hard to tell.

THE MODERATOR: My understanding, they booed Clemson when they came on the court.

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: There you go. Shout out for the South Carolina fans who up for a game that's not their own team. They're good fans. I'm sure they won't be rooting for us Monday night, and that's fair, but they came out today and hopefully saw a really good basketball game.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. See you tomorrow.

LINDSAY GOTTLIEB: Thank you.

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