

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

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

Clemson Tigers Coach Shawn Poppie Mia Moore Raven Thompson

Media Conference

USC 71, Clemson 67

THE MODERATOR: We have the Clemson Tigers, joined by head coach Shawn Poppie and student-athletes Mia Moore and Raven Thompson.

Coach, an opening statement.

SHAWN POPPIE: It was a tough, tough day for Tigers. Sad locker room in there, but nothing to hang your head on. I couldn't be more proud of the group we have. They fought their butts off. Unfortunately, today, Southern Cal was one possession or 0.1 second better than us.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Were you involved in the final discussion when they were talking about the shot? Was there any doubt in your mind that it was good?

MIA MOORE: Initially, I thought it was good, but I guess it came off short. I really thought I was going to at least get the foul call there and be able to at least go to the foul line.

Q. For both of you, I know the result wasn't what you wanted. What do you think the country learned about Clemson culture and women's basketball today.

RAVEN THOMPSON: I think the country learned that we're a really good basketball team. Not just the team we have now. Upcoming years, I think we set the standard, and I feel like the teams he's going to coach is going to live up to it.



MIA MOORE: I feel like we definitely shocked the world this season. A lot of people had their doubts about us, but like Ray-Ray said, we set the standard, and this is who Clemson is going to be moving forward.

Q. Ladies, obviously, tough loss. What has this program just meant to the both of you? You're both seniors. You both transferred here and had a limited time for your team to gel together. You had a really competitive game in the first round. How much as this program meant to you, and how much has Coach Poppie meant to you?

MIA MOORE: It's definitely meant the most to me. I haven't had the best college career, just dealing with injuries. Coach Poppie welcomed me with open arms. He's allowed me to just be who I am. He never changed my game. He never said I had to do this or that. He just allowed me to be me, and he really didn't just grow me as a player. He really grew me as a person. He taught me a lot of life lessons, and that's something I'll take with forever.

And my teammates, they're going to hold a special place in my heart forever just because it's not a lot of places you can get a lot of girls who really are just great girls. Like really put together a group of girls that just could love on each other. There's no ill will ever. If somebody plays zero minutes, it doesn't matter. Somebody plays 40 minutes, it doesn't matter. We're still going to love on each other. And collectively, we just want to win.

RAVEN THOMPSON: Obviously, I've been here for four years. It's been the best four years of my life. For him to take a chance on me as a freshman and not knowing what my minutes or anything would look like means the world to me.

Q. I know the emotions are flowing now. Was it difficult at all to reset your mind to get back for overtime? Because you're out there on the court thinking you had won, celebrating as if you'd won, and all of a sudden it was like stop, hold on.

RAVEN THOMPSON: I feel like we just took it as like it was another five minutes for us to play. It wasn't a reset. It



happened so we had to come out and play another five minutes. It was nothing to it.

MIA MOORE: I feel like we just took it as another opportunity, but we came up short.

Q. Going into those final minutes, you guys kept it incredibly close. Was there any discussion prior to the free throws that were made by USC in your strategy and focus towards overtime?

MIA MOORE: Can you repeat that?

Q. When y'all were sending USC to the line, there were a couple of misses there. Were there any discussions on what the strategy would be in the late minutes?

MIA MOORE: Just that it's going to come down to the stretch and that the little things are going to matter most. And on defense, that we just really need to communicate.

Q. For both of you, what would your message be to any upcoming recruit or player in transfer portal that is thinking about choosing Clemson and coming to play with Coach Poppie?

MIA MOORE: Just that you're going to come into an atmosphere where the coaches want you to be better not just as a person but as a player. They're going to get on you, but it's coming from a good place.

RAVEN THOMPSON: Come be a Tiger. Like she said, things are going to get rough, but just take it in and just learn from your mistakes.

Q. Mia, your fourth quarter, I think you were scoreless until the fourth but made some big shots. What was the difference in the fourth quarter? You seemed to be going to the basket a little bit more and hit a couple big 3s there.

MIA MOORE: Everybody was just telling me to keep shooting and just remember who I am at the end of the day. Tried to make some big shots for my team. It was just, I feel like something clicked. I really just wanted to win for us.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a great season.

Questions for Coach Poppie.

Q. Shawn, when they called you guys over to talk about the play, did you know what the deal was then, or how did they explain it to you?

SHAWN POPPIE: I had no idea. I thought they were just reviewing did she get the shot off in time. And if not, when did the foul occur. I had no idea that they took a stopwatch over there and tried to clock it from -- I had no idea that was going on. Obviously, it was a little bit of a shock because we had no clue until that point.

Q. Shawn, much like I asked the players, the emotions of that moment and having to go back and say, all right, we've got to play some more. They're 20-year-olds.

SHAWN POPPIE: It was very difficult. I mean, you try to get in there and motivate them as much as you can. Hey, it's just going to take an extra five to beat them because they had just thought they had won. Whether they count the basket or Mia goes to the free-throw line and they have no time-outs, everything in their mind is we just won a first round game.

So for them to have an emotional, I mean, again, just a quick time-out is you just try to motivate them as much as you can that for whatever reason, we have to go back out there. Let's prove that although this might take 45 minutes, we're the better basketball team. It's easier said than done. You can motivate all you want, but there's a question mark in their minds as they go out there.

It was very tough. Give Southern Cal credit. I thought they made big, big shots down the stretch, especially there in overtime.

Q. Coach, I know there's a lot of emotions, especially this time of year. You've talked a lot about how much this team as meant to you all season long. Just now in the locker room, when you were giving all of them hugs and going around, it was something that when we spoke to them, it really resonated with all of them for how much you care. Can you speak to how much you care and how much this team has cared all year?

SHAWN POPPIE: We've got an unbelievable group of kids in that locker room. They took a chance on us. There's Demeara Hinds, transfer, one year. Taylor Johnson-Matthews, transfer, one year. Rachael Rose, transfer, one year. Hadley Periman, transfer, one year. Morgan Lee, transfer, one year.

You obviously have the returners of Raven and a handful of others. For them to truly believe they'll come to Clemson to go to an NCAA Tournament and change the path of what we are as a program, they believed in us before anything happened. They trusted in me, my staff, and we hit a home run with the type of kids we got. I mean, a home run.

They are just unbelievable kids. I've slept very well in the sense of not having to worry about them getting in trouble or what are they doing since they got on campus. In fact, the only sleep I lose is days like today, where you come up one possession short because you want it so bad for them.

They've taken every challenge, every up and down as the season has gone on, and there's never an excuse. It's what do I have to be better at? What can I do better? How can I love on my team better? And when you have a team like that, it is just so much fun to coach.

So you're heartbroken for them. As a coach, can I just get them one more possession so we get a chance to play another day.

Again, they've set the standard for what Clemson is going to be, and they'll always have a place that they can call home in Clemson. I told the seniors, now is the time when they can truly see how much we love them.

I'll do anything in the world for all of them, whether that be they want to keep playing, whether they need some kind of help getting into another school. We've got some going to nursing school. Whether they're lost still. We've got some that don't know what they want to do yet. These upcoming months and years, they'll see how much we truly love them. We'll be with them every step of the way.

Q. Can you tell us specifically what the officials told you in explanation on that final shot?

SHAWN POPPIE: Yeah. They said when they got the stopwatch out, I guess as they timed it, the whistle was not blown before what they said was zeroes on the stopwatch is how it was explained to me.

Q. Coach, in the pregame press conferences, a bunch of the girls referenced a moment this summer when you pointed up in the rafters in Littlejohn Coliseum, talked about making history. Tough to process emotions at a time like this, but what pride do you take in making history at Clemson and putting Clemson back in the NCAA Tournament?

SHAWN POPPIE: There is no one outside that locker room that truly thought they could do that. And if you said, yeah, they can, they're lying. So for them to get us there, how they got us there, it's something they can never -- it can never get taken away from them.

It's obviously very special for all of them, for us because I think that you continue to prove in '25-'26 that maybe you don't need to have the most money. Maybe you don't have

to have the most talent, but you still can have the old-school team, and they're going to compete their butts off for one another, and you can still reach dreams and aspirations. And that's what they just did.

If you went man to man, roster to roster throughout this entire year, that's probably why no one thought we could be here. But here we are, and I think that we can take a lot of that movement forward.

That's the culture of who Clemson women's basketball is while we continue to try to get, obviously, more and more talent. We have a heck of a freshman class coming in. I like the returning class we've got coming back.

Candidly, Mia Moore, we just put a waiver in -- I'll be honest with y'all -- last week. There's a potential to try to get her six years. To be honest, if I can speak on anything, that's one of the right reasons that waiver exists. That kid deserves an extra year based off her situation. I really hope that the NCAA sees that.

With that said, the ones that are for sure returning, I think that they obviously can help the next group of just what Clemson -- how we do things. And if you do it this way, the results will come.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

SHAWN POPPIE: Appreciate y'all. Thank you so much.

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