

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Florida State vs Alabama

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Moody Center

Alabama Crimson Tide

Kristy Curry

Sarah Ashlee Barker

Aaliyah Nye

Media Conference



Obviously losing Jess, it's hard. Like SA said, we just got to keep going, trust God's plan. I think Karly is going to be a great piece for us as well. She comes in and she works hard. She works just as hard as Jess. We believe in her, as well.

THE MODERATOR: You were speaking of Jessica Timmons who has been lost for the post-season.

Q. Can you describe what playing in the SEC is like and how did that prep y'all for post-season play?

AALIYAH NYE: Playing in the SEC is tough. It takes a lot of grit. I came from the Big Ten and I can tell you the SEC is more fast paced and physical. I think it just prepares us for the NCAA tournament, playing other teams, because I feel like we are the most physical conference. We're competitive. We're gritty. I think just playing in the SEC just makes you a better person and a better player all around, so...

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, she answered it pretty well.

Q. You mentioned Karly stepping up in a larger role. You got to see her make the transition from high school to college. How about the transition now? What have you seen from her game this year?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think Karly is the type of player that you know what you're going to get from her every single day, every single practice, every single game. You know she's going to do the little things that it takes to win. She's going to get on the floor, she's going to rebound, she's going to make the extra pass, she's going to defend for us.

You never have to worry about the attitude that she brings. She has a great attitude. She's going to listen to the coaches. Karly is honestly everything you would want in a player if you were a coach is how I would say it.

She's a great friend, a great teammate. Just the hustle that she brings, you know she's got a great basketball IQ, she can shoot the crap out of the ball. I don't think people

THE MODERATOR: We are featuring University of Alabama. We'll start with questions for the two student-athletes.

We will open it up for questions.

Q. How does losing a starter, a good player, teammate, how does that impact you as a team and individually?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think when you lose somebody on your team, it's heartbreaking because the work and the dedication she put into our team this year is remarkable. She's an amazing leader, an amazing person. She's a great basketball player. She did so many things for our team.

I think you just have to kind of accept it and you have to understand that she told us she's going to be behind us, she's going to support us, she's going to be the leader she needs to be off the court for us. You just got to trust God's plan at the end of the day. God always has a plan for this team. God has a plan for Jess. His plan is always the right plan. That's where we're going to do, that's what we're going to do.

It sucks for her. We feel for her. At the end of the day you've got to be able to accept it like I said. We're going to support her just like she's supporting us for the NCAA tournament.

AALIYAH NYE: Yeah, I completely agree with what SA said. I think Karly coming in for her and starting for us is good for us. We trust Karly as much as we trust Jess.



realize how good of vision she has for people. She can really find people. Her passing ability, it's a skill that she has, not many people really notice that.

I think that just being able to have someone that you know is going to bring it and going to bring their 100% that day, you can't ever question what you're going to get from Karly Weathers.

AALIYAH NYE: To piggyback off of SA, I think she came in last year as the only freshman. We always joked, we didn't feel like she was a freshman. She's always been a leader since the day she stepped on campus. She's an amazing teammate. She is a leader and she's vocal. I think, yeah, what SA said, just adding onto that, she's a really good leader even when she was a freshman.

Just seeing her grow is amazing.

Q. Aliyah, you're one of the top three-point shooters in the country. This is a basic question. What makes a good three-point shooter? Why have you been able to excel?

AALIYAH NYE: I would say just my coaches and teammates finding me when I'm open. My coaches putting me in position to get me those shots. Obviously just working on my shot, getting in the gym, shooting on the gun and things like that. I would say those things.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: She works hard, really, really hard. She's not just a good shooter because she's just a good shooter. All the hours she puts in. I see it all the time. She doesn't miss in practice. There's a reason you don't miss in practice, because of all the hard work she puts in. She's not going to say that. I'm very grateful to have a teammate that works as hard as she does.

AALIYAH NYE: I would say confidence, as well, having confidence in your shot, so...

Q. Women's basketball has had a lot of eyes on it over the past few years. That continues to grow. What does it mean to you to be a part of the growing legacy?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think it means a lot. I feel like in a lot of interviews that Aaliyah and I have had, that's the main topic, how much women's basketball is growing, how much it has grown.

I think there's always room for improvement in anything that needs to be improved. With that being said, it's remarkable. The things that are happening across women's sports with people who are watching it on TV, people who are younger girls that are looking up to us.

For me, I've always wanted to inspire young girls because I had other girls inspire me when I was a young kid. I think that's the most important thing. We're showing young girls you can go out there and play as hard as you want, be as tough as you want and be yourself. I think that's what women's basketball is really about right now. People are going out there, being who they are, playing how they are, who they want to be. They're not shying from it.

I think that's caught a lot of people's eyes. We can be emotional in a good way. It's not dramatic. It's been a lot of fun to see people like Caitlin Clark and Angel Reese. You have so much respect for players like them because they're growing the game, we're all growing the game.

Just inspiring little girls is something I think we all want to do.

Q. Since you guys are more senior members of the team, how are you taking leadership roles going into this tournament?

AALIYAH NYE: I think just coming in and giving everyone confidence, just being leaders, communicating, just coming in every single day at practice, competing. Just telling our teammates what we want out of them, like what is expected.

I think we've all been, both of us, in positions, we came to the NCAA tournament, we lost last year, we know how that feels. I think just having that experience and letting our younger players just know how that feels, know what's expected during this time is what we've been trying to emphasize.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I agree with her. I also think when you have older players, seniors, that hold each other accountable, I hold Aaliyah accountable, she holds me accountable, it trickles down to your team. Everyone believes in each other. Everyone trusts in each other. Everyone knows that we want what's best for each other.

Even times when you have to say the hard things, no one takes it personal. It's about how is Alabama going to be great and how is Alabama going to play Alabama basketball. At the end of the day you have to have trust within your whole team starting from a senior to a freshman. We truly have that.

So we're excited about the opportunity that we have ahead. We know, like Aaliyah said, what happened last year was unfortunate. You don't want to be in that same position. We're going to use that and just communicate with our teammates and understand that we can go and do

something big.

Q. Sarah, you said you have to say some of the tough things sometimes. As an 8 seed on the road, down a starter, how have you rallied the troops?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think it starts with trust. It starts with having faith. Everyone on this team has a lot of faith in God's plan at the end of the day. God as a plan, whatever that plan he has for us is his plan and we're all going to be on that train and trust him.

I think as soon as we knew that Jess went down, we all just kind of gathered together and told each other, Hey, we've experienced hard times before. Think about the off-season and conditioning. You think about all the things you had to do to lead up to this point. That's where you got through those moments. You pushed through those moments, so you know those moments prepared you for moments like this. They're going to continue to prepare you and make you ready for a moment like this on Friday. If one man goes down, you know you have the next person to step up in line because you've already had to overcome adversity throughout the off-season. You've already had to push through the tough times.

I think that's what you tell your team. You tell your team, Hey, we've been here, we've done this, let's keep going. You have an injured player, Jessica, behind us. She's not showing me she's sad. If I was her, I'd be a wreck. She's not showing us that. She's right there with us telling us, Hey, you don't need me to be on this floor to win these games. When you have a player telling you that, it makes you have this type of energy and just excitement that you want to go do something for her. We have something to play for. We have something to accomplish knowing we're going to go do this for Jessica. What she's doing for us off the court, being an injured player, that makes you want to go. I want to go play right now talking about it.

But yeah, so...

Q. For fans who are getting to watch Alabama women's basketball for the first time this year, can you explain what grit, love and gratitude means?

AALIYAH NYE: Grit, love and gratitude is kind of what it says. We're going to be gritty. We're going to show love to each other. We're going to be grateful for the opportunity that we have, every opportunity. I think that just is what we're about.

I don't know if you have anything to add.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Grit is just toughness.

Pushing through the hard times. Love is loving on each other. Even when things don't go your way, you still love on each other. When things go your way, you still love on each other. Then gratitude, you're grateful for the opportunity, grateful that we are here, that you're at the University of Alabama that has given so much to you.

You're grateful that you have teammates, coaches that mean so much to you, that do so many things for you. That's what Alabama basketball is. Honestly if you think about it, that's what the University of Alabama is. The University of Alabama is where legends are made. It's not just on the court, in the classroom, it's who you are as a person. That's where grit, love and gratitude comes into play. You take all those three things. If you can do those three things, buy in as a team, hold that as your motto, you can do a lot of fun and exciting things.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so much.

We are now joined by University of Alabama head coach Kristy Curry.

Coach, if you would make an opening statement, then we'll take questions.

KRISTY CURRY: Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

I'm proud of our team. We've won eight of the last 10 conference games, with the two losses being to LSU and South Carolina. Obviously the SEC tournament didn't go the way we wanted. But really love what our team has accomplished here over the last couple of months. It's been an amazing 10-month journey.

To lose 71% of our scoring, 60-plus% of our rebounds, 45% of our assists, having only five players returning, two starters. We had an opportunity to kick off our summer with a trip to Spain. Feel like it really has impacted our chemistry, our grittiness, toughness. They're a selfless group that play for the front of their chest, the University of Alabama.

Excited about the opportunity that this weekend presents. We're playing a great basketball team. I think we both have 23 wins. They have two first-team all-ACC selections. We're going to have our hands full. We're excited and have a lot of respect for Florida State and their program.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions.

Q. Where does losing Timmons impact you the most?

KRISTY CURRY: It impacts us, but I also feel very

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

confident that we will have some other folks that step up. I think Karly Weathers has done an unbelievable job all season, being as good as anyone in the SEC off the bench, the way she consistently makes plays.

Del'Janae Williams will come in and give us some assistance. We're going to do some things that we feel like we've prepared for the last two weeks.

I love the fact that the SEC tournament and us not playing up until Selection Sunday, the weekend of, I think has given us a chance to kind of take a deep breath and adjust.

Jess has done an unbelievable job. She's a three-level scorer. She gave us another ball handler in the backcourt. I think we'll miss her physicality, but I feel confident in having other players that can step up.

Q. We're checking with coaches around the country, all the things going on in college athletics that you have to deal with, does it make the job less fun, stuff away from the court?

KRISTY CURRY: Not at all. I'm having the best time I've had. I feel like as coaches, I'm excited for the growth of our game. I'm excited for the support for women's athletics and women's basketball. To see where it was 10, 12, 15 years ago, to see where we're at now...

I think you have to focus on the positive. As the head coach in this day and time, I feel like we've done a really good job of adapting, adjusting, growing and being challenged to be better than I was yesterday.

I embrace the moment and the opportunities ahead. Just want to put our young ladies in the best position with a 40-year plan every day.

Q. How meaningful is it to coach against Brooke Wyckoff given everything she's gone through in the past year?

KRISTY CURRY: It's amazing. Just a simple basketball game, to have that opportunity is nothing like what Brooke has done. The way she's handled it has been unbelievable. Have a lot of respect for her. Enjoyed her as a player. Then a long time assistant to one of my best friends in the business with Sue (indiscernible).

What they've done with that program, I have so much respect. Every day now is much bigger than basketball. It's a message to all of us to continue to try to support her and support the cause. I just have a lot of respect.

She's a great mom. She's a great example to so many

young women. Just her fight, the fight that we have tomorrow is nowhere near what she's gone through every day. I have great respect for it. She's in my prayers every single day.

Q. I'm interested in what is life in the SEC like and how did that prepare you for the post-season in this tournament?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, life in the SEC is there's no day off. At the end of the day we feel like our schedule, night in and night out, it's certainly a little different.

I've been blessed to be in the Big Ten, to be in the Big 12, now to be in the SEC for 11 years. They're all amazing leagues, but also different styles of play. Different physicality. All are really special in their own way.

I feel like our players will be prepared because there's not a day off. So the challenge that our league presents, the preparation, the execution of the game plans, the different styles of play.

I think with Florida State, they're extremely talented in transition. When you look at the SEC, it's a transition league, an easy basket league, put-backs on the offensive glass.

The ability for us to understand and recognize we've had those experiences lately. Some we've handled well, some we have not. They score 76 a game. They gave up 74 a game. We score 70 a game. The basketball game will come down to transition baskets, transition defense, who can win the transition game. That's often the way it is night in and night out in the SEC.

Q. We just talked to Sarah Ashlee and Aaliyah. I was wondering how those two specifically have kind of taken a leadership role going into this tournament, especially coming out of the SEC tournament?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, both have just been unbelievable with their work ethic. They're not only vocal leaders for us, but they're action leaders. They had an opportunity to experience the NCAA tournament a year ago. We didn't like the end result with that. Sarah Ashlee is our most experienced player on our roster, the fact that she's been to four NCAA tournaments.

Their action the last two weeks certainly has been great role models as examples. Like I've said all year long, we wouldn't be sitting here today with our leadership core group, and that's Sarah Ashlee Barker, Aaliyah Nye and Loyal McQueen. All three are unbelievable every single day with their leadership, character, work ethic, their

vocalness, their communication.

I'm just really proud for those three because to do what we're doing with there being only five returnees, it's a lot bigger than your coaching staff, it's about your locker room, and they've done an unbelievable job with it at all year.

Q. What do you remember about Lindsay Wisdom-Hylton and her time with you at Purdue?

KRISTY CURRY: Unbelievable. I can see right now sitting in her living room the exact couch, the exact living room. She had little sisters running around. Her high school coach unbelievable.

Man, she came out in that same class with Candace Parker. To be a first-round draft pick, to have the opportunity to coach her for four years. One of the first texts I got the other day, I can't wait to see you, coach.

She's one of the brightest and best that our game has to offer. Tremendous role model. We talk about wins, I understand that. Those are wins to me. To see these young ladies go on and be successful like Lindsay, I'm so incredibly proud of her. She has a bright future, future head coach in our game.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much for your team.

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