

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Alabama vs Texas

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Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

Alabama Crimson Tide
Coach Kristy Curry
Sarah Ashlee Barker
Loyal McQueen
Aaliyah Nye
Media Conference

Q. This is for any of the players. You had a I don't want to say easy, but you scored last night, inside, outside. What have you noticed about Texas that might be more problematic defensively?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I think when it comes to Texas, they're an aggressive team on the offensive end, defensive end said. They deny you really hard. They're really good defensively sound.

We know they're going to play really, really hard, and so I think that it's really just about taking care of the ball. They really force their opponents to turn the ball over.

Last night we didn't take care of the ball so we know going into tomorrow we have to take care of the ball a lot better, because they take those turnovers and push in transition when you turn the ball over.

So it's really just about trying to take care of the ball. Defensive rebound, they're going to be really model hard only the offensive glass. They're big. They have a big presence.

From a defensive standpoint they're just going to be in the gaps the whole game, use their length, and we have to be able to just try and attack and not be afraid to take it to the hoop because of their length.

Q. For Sarah Ashlee Aaliyah, what have you two noticed about how Loyal has stepped in the starting role this season and where do you think she's grown



the most?

AALIYAH NYE: Obviously be a point guard is hard. You have to know everybody's position. You have to be very vocal. I think something I've seen Loyal grow the past -- like just this season and from last year, is she's very vocal. She's just -- something that we need.

She is a point guard we need. Very vocal this year. She stepped into her role and she is just a great leader all around. She is starting to find her game I feel like in these past few games. I'm just very proud of where she has come and how much she's grown.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I would agree to that. I also think that she's one of the hardest workers on this team. You know what you're going to get from her every single night. When things don't go her way she doesn't put her head down. She continues to push and continues to get through adversity.

I think that having a senior like that, you know, freshmen look up to her like that. She's really close with Essence Cody, and she has been a mentor for her. I've definitely loved seeing that. I love seeing that relationship.

She's just a great person. She's a great teammate. At the end of the day she's -- like Aaliyah was saying, it's hard being a point guard. I'm not in her shoes. You have to take control of your team, command the ball, handle defensive pressure the whole game.

And so I think she's done a great job with that this year. I think that if I was in her position as a point guard I would feel stressed at times. I'm really proud of her and who she is and the player she's become being and also the player she is now.

But, yeah.

LOYAL McQUEEN: Thanks, guys.

Q. Sarah Ashlee, take me through last night. How do you -- what did you think of your teammates picking you up when you were in foul trouble? When I looked



over you always seemed engaged, up and at 'em. How do you handle that yourself?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I'm going to be honest. As competitor I want to be on the floor, but I really -- after the game I was actually talking to, you know, one of my friends and I was like, it was probably the most happy I've been in a game from a standpoint of being able to cheer my teammates on.

Usually I'm on the floor and some of those teammates that I was cheering for last year are usually on the bench cheering for me, so it kind of gave me a chance to -- everything that they've done for me this year picking me up, cheering me on the bench, saying you're doing such a good job, I got to do that for them last night. I really cherished that moment.

I was able to pick them up and be like, hey, you don't need me to win this game. At the end of the day the game of basketball isn't one person. You have five people on the floor, you have coaches and bench players. I knew coming out with foul trouble I had to be engaged for my team and be the leader they need me to be.

A leader isn't just someone on the floor. It's someone off the court in their life in general. I knew that. I knew that last night my job was to cheer the team on on the sideline and I had to do that.

I took full responsibility. But I had coaches in my ear saying, we need you. Your presence is felt. We need it from you even if you're not on the floor.

They looked at me last night when I came out and, hey, we're good. Like we got you. So I know that I have their back, they have my back. That's all you can do in those situations, because you're not going to get calls that go your way sometimes.

You can't be frustrated about that. I'm very grateful that we won the game last night and I had no doubt that they were going to pick my back up last night.

Q. Question for Loyal. Just how did you see Alabama's depth really shine yesterday? Looked a little different on the floor at times, but offense put up 82 points. How did it flow with different depth on the floor?

LOYAL McQUEEN: It just goes to show how many great pieces that we have. Like SA said, she's typically on the floor, but Karly Weathers did a great job last night. She up big for us. Burger Williams came in and gave us some good minutes offensively and defensively.

Who knows what tomorrow brings. Who knows who is going to get in foul trouble. Just super thankful for them. They show up every day and work extremely hard, so in those moments I'm happy they were able to step up last night.

Q. We all know that after a win you guys go get ice cream. What are some of ya'll's favorite flavors?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: This is the best question I've ever been asked. If you know me, ice cream is my thing. I eat it every single day. I'm like more of a chocolate girly so I just anything chocolate. You can add system cookie dough in there, Oreos, brownies. I could go on and on about ice cream. I'll let them take the floor now.

AALIYAH NYE: Thanks for that question. I like fruity flavors, so I'm more of like raspberry sorbet type of girl or just like the rainbow sorbet. So, yeah.

LOYAL McQUEEN: I'm more of a simple girl, so like more of like just chocolate. You know being maybe a little brown knee or something like that. But just chocolate.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: You have to add the brownie. You have to.

AALIYAH NYE: Warmed.

Q. Loyal, the way Essence played last night, what do you need from her tomorrow given the size you talked about with Texas and depth they have up front?

LOYAL McQUEEN: Yeah, like I said, Essence has no clue how good she can be. I think every day I just talk to her about continuing to believe in herself and continuing to be aggressive.

So tomorrow we're just going to need for her like I said in those moments if she gets a foul call to keep her composure. We're going to need her tomorrow to be a force on the inside and continue to crash the boards and to also be aggressive looking for her own shot as well.

Q. This is for any of the players. What is the mindset going into tomorrow knowing the crowd is going to be against ya'll? Neutral, I guess. But hostile territory. What's the mindset with that?

AALIYAH NYE: We have to just come in and stay together. Basketball is a game of runs, so they're going to go on runs and we're going to go on runs. I think we just have to stay together, play Alabama basketball, and just go with our game plan.



They're really good. They're a bigger team than Florida State, so we just have to rebound and can't put them at the line. I think just coming in with your our game plan and being vocal and loud and just sticking together.

LOYAL McQUEEN: Yeah, I'm just super excited. I think it's going to be fun. You know, this is what March Madness is all about. So, you know, I'm just super blessed to be here. I can't wait for tomorrow.

KRISTY CURRY: Really, again, just excited for our team. It's a one-game season. The sense of urgency and purpose to reset at midnight is something we talk about frequently in the SEC, so hopefully we can draw from our experiences of a quick refocus and just handling or recovery the way we've gone about it all season, because we're playing a really good Texas team on their home floor.

We'll have to play near perfect to give ourselves a chance to be down the stretch with them.

Q. Loyal said that Essence Cody has no clue how good she can be. Why is that and how do you get a clue in that situation?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, she's so incredibly humble and just one of the sweetest, most respectful -- you know, had a relationship with her since the eighth grade. We offered her an eighth grader and continued to build a relationship.

In this day and time it is so refreshing to have a young lady that really cared about the things that you should value in the recruiting process.

Her character, her mom is absolutely incredible. She really has things in perspective. I do think she probably knows how good she can be. I think that as a freshman it's difficult because you're playing most times now -- the portal has created, you're playing against 21, 22, 23 year olds.

In the SEC she played against two freshmen, one at Missouri and then the young lady from Auburn. So there wasn't a lot of ease, and, hey, I'm playing against some kids that have a lot of the experience.

She's just continued to grow try and improve and has brought a great work ethic ever day. You know, it is, it's scary how good how good she can be, but I think we all felt coming in that she could be great.

Q. Yesterday 26 minutes for Burger Williams off the bench. How important was she not only in that game, but coaching her this year?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, she's selfless, humble. Just wants her team to be successful and help when her number is called. I've been telling her all year, it's going to come at some point. I really love what she does on the defensive side of the ball. She really gives us another dimension on the ball.

I thought she hit the big three yesterday, made some great additions. Came up with the loose ball hustle rebound there at the end. She is a fifth year and understands the things that she can bring. She plays within herself.

And again, I need her to look to be more aggressive offensively. We're going to continue to encourage that because she really can score. Just happy for her, because she made a decision to put everything that she had from accolades aside to come play on a great team and really been a grade addition.

It shows the kind of character she has.

Q. What will be the keys to maintain the pace you like to play against Texas?

KRISTY CURRY: We felt like the SEC has prepared us for that because we've seen it night in and night out in the SEC. We see big, physical. You know, I think they're are four dimensions to Texas that we've seen a lot of this season, and we're going to have to draw from our experience.

You know, I think when you look at -- they score 40 points in the paint, and it's going to be critical we protect the paint and don't give them second-chance points.

You know, that's something that our league, that we've done well at times and that we haven't done well at times. So tomorrow going to need to be a five star not a three star with that.

Then I think you have to take care of the basketball against Vic's teams. They're scoring 12 points off turnovers. We had way too many yesterday. Was that because we had two weeks since we played? I'm not sure.

At the end of the day we have to take care of the basketball. That's when we've been our most successful in the SEC. I think it's really, really important too, one of the critical stats of Texas, they make more free throws than our opponents have shot, and that's something we take a lot of pride in night in and night out.

The ability to handle the physicality and to have toughness about us, when we have done that, we've been successful getting to the free throw line and converting. I think it'll be

a test of wills at the free throw line tomorrow night.

Then I think it's really, really important, gosh, we have to rebound. That's the most critical stat to the game. Because they're big and they run waves of big at and you, tall and physical. You know, when you look at an LSU or a South Carolina, that's how they remind me of.

We're going to have to stay close on the boards. They outrebounded I think 30 of 35 games if I'm not mistaken. I think those four will be critical keys to our success. It's been critical keys to our success in every SEC game this season.

Q. Coach, congratulations on your win. We just talked to some of the players, and after a big road game we know you guys get ice cream. What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, it was so late last night that when we got home that we're going tonight after film. I already told them I think we have to walk 500 feet. I'm not sure. Supposed to be really good. I can't remember the name of the location. I have to take care of it because I didn't get a chance it last night because of the time.

But just depends on the location. It if it's Andy's if it's Braum's, TCBY, Baskin Robbins. I have a favorite at each one of those. I'm not sure where we're going, but I'll have them pull the menu up so I'll be prepared this evening.

We're a big ice cream bunch. Sarah Ashlee Barker, if you want her to be happy, get her some ice cream. Loyal, Aaliyah, it's really fun to watch them just enjoy a little thing that makes a big difference.

We're such big believers those things that build chemistry. I feel like we've done a really good job through the years. Our kids know it's bigger than basketball and we can take some time to get to know each other through a simple ice cream cone.

Q. I guess you'll be seeing a lot more of her in future years. What are your initial impressions of Madison Booker?

KRISTY CURRY: Being from Mississippi, I had a chance to watch her in summer AAU ball. I can't probably tell you -- it's a bunch. You know, then the opportunity to see her from an international experience perspective, I think she is incredibly talented. I think a lot of that is -- she's more talented beyond her years because of her international experience.

And I think she's got great size. The one is how selfless

she is. She would rather share the ball than look to score. Whatever a team needs, she's really found a way to do that. I'm not shocked, surprised. I know Vic had a chance to build a relationship with her in Mississippi.

She's just really, really, really special talent. I'm excited to see what she does in the future. I think she will just, again, add another layer of talent and special players in the SEC, as will the entire program. Excited to welcome them to the SEC. Might as well get used to this so we can get a step ahead. Let's get started in the spring to get ready for next January.

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