

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Jackson State vs UConn

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

## Jackson State Lady Tigers

### Tomekia Reed

Coach

### Angel Jackson

### Ti'ian Boler

Media Conference



mean obviously you knew she was going to be good, but were they better than you thought they were going to be? What happened there in the first quarter?

ANGEL JACKSON: I feel like it was all on us. Like Coach Reed said, we did come out with some jitters. We expected UConn to play that way, so it was mainly just how we played, how we came out for the first half. It just wasn't Jackson State basketball but I glad we did pick it up at the end.

TI'IAN BOLER: I would say that the first quarter jitters were definitely on us. They just took advantage and made the shots. If we would have defended better and locked in more, then I think it would have been a better outcome.

MODERATOR: Questions for the student athletes? Right here on the right.

**Q. Can you two just talk about the support from your fans and the pep band who traveled halfway across the country to come and support you in a room full of a lot of UConn fans?**

TI'IAN BOLER: I love my HBCU. I love my fans. I love the band. That was really sweet of them. We were excited when we loaded up, and it made us feel at home that we got to bring some home to Connecticut, so.

ANGEL JACKSON: It was amazing seeing our fans in the stands, just knowing that they came out here to support us means so much to us. We feed off of their energy, they feed off of our energy, so I just want to give a shout out to everybody that came out. We love the boom.

MODERATOR: Right here on the left on the aisle.

**Q. She Loves Thee Podcast, Timona. I wanted to ask this question to Ti'ian Boler. You played a lights-out game, you had 25 points. Can you talk a little bit about your adjustments from the first half to the second half, where you picked it up?**

TI'IAN BOLER: I would say that I was just being relentless because at one point I wasn't even looking at the score, I

Connecticut 86, Jackson State 64

MODERATOR: The format will be opening statement from coach. Then we'll move onto questions for the student-athletes. Coach, why don't you make an opening statement?

TOMEKIA REED: All right. Great game. Great game I thought with UConn. They did a great job. Really proud of our players who have done a really good job coming in. I thought we had a really good game plan but we kind of let the first quarter get out of hand. Being in this environment, a tough environment, UConn having the home court advantage, I thought our players had jitters in that first quarter trying to get after it.

But overall I asked the players to contest every shot, I asked them to slow the ball down from being rotated side to side. The game plan was to run multiple defenses at UConn to kind of mix them up a little bit. We really wanted a different outcome, wanted our players to be more competitive, but overall, I thought that we did a great job and I'm just really proud to be able to continue to play in a first round against a really good UConn.

MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes? Up front, Pat.

**Q. For both of you, can you just talk about that first quarter and they went on a 17-0 run and you guys were kind of never really able to recover from that, what were they doing that -- were they doing anything that surprised you? Was Paige better than you thought? I**



was just chipping away, trying to get back into the game, like I didn't see a person in front of me at a point, like I just saw rim so I was just like, okay. In the first quarter I was kind of a little jittery, I admit that but I kind of let it go like second -- that second media timeout. That's when I knew like, oh, I'm in this moment. I'm just as good as them, so that's when I started playing like it.

MODERATOR: Question here on the right.

**Q. My question's for Angel. Angel, I asked Coach Auriemma about your play. He mentioned you in terms of how you were able to help the team today. What do you take away from this experience?**

ANGEL JACKSON: It was a great experience just playing on this stage. This is my first March Madness, so it felt amazing. I want to say thank you to Coach Geno. It really was the best time I could have. I'm glad I did get to play on this stage and show off for my team and although we did come up short, I'm glad of how we performed.

MODERATOR: Second row on the right right here.

**Q. Angel, I saw a look of pride on your face when your teammate started talking about herself. Can you talk about her performance and how excited you were to see her accomplish that?**

ANGEL JACKSON: If you guys don't know, this is my bestie. I'm so proud of her. I met Ti'ian last year. She's been outstanding, phenomenal for us. She always knows how to get the ball in and how to create her shots so I just love the way she plays and glad that she did come out. That's what got us going today. She played so hard and we had to follow behind her and we stepped it up with her.

MODERATOR: We'll go up front to Pat.

**Q. For both of you, social media blew up just a little bit. I know you gave up two points on the play but can you guys talk about Miya's athleticism and getting up there and getting a goal tend call in the women's game and what you showed in terms of athleticism and what you can do out there?**

TI'IAN BOLER: She does that every practice. She do that every practice, literally. No matter if she's the only one running, she's going to be determined to get that ball and tap it. She do it every day so I was shocked that she did it. I was shocked but I wasn't because she did it every day. If you go to our SWAC game, she does it every time she goes on fast break, every time.

ANGEL JACKSON: She just has relentless effort. She's

going to chase down them balls every time, so I know once that ball goes up, Miya Crumple is going to be at the rim. She's going to meet you at the rim. She's fearful. She's an amazing player.

TI'IAN BOLER: Yeah, she's not afraid to jump with anybody. Nobody. She's not afraid. She's going to jump with you. No matter how tall, she's going to jump with you.

MODERATOR: Question here on the left.

**Q. This question is for Angel Jackson. Your being the defensive player of the year in the SWAC, can you talk a little bit about the defense that you displayed today? The blocks? And blocking people out and going against Aaliyah Edwards, how you prepared yourself, whether it was watching film?**

ANGEL JACKSON: Yeah, I did prepare myself by watching film, just not really coming in thinking that, oh, they're going to give it to me, just making sure I check off all my assignments. My defense was a little slow at first today, but I feel like I did pick it up as the game went on, so it was a great match-up. I did struggle with some fouls a little early, but I feel like second half was a better defensive half.

MODERATOR: We'll take a question from Zoom. Rob, go ahead.

**Q. Hey, ladies, this is Rob from The Next. Obviously, great season and congrats on all you have accomplished. What will you both remember most about this year? Maybe not just from a basketball standpoint, obviously you've done a lot of winning and that's been documented, but what is something you're going to remember most about this season that maybe we don't know, something behind the scenes, something unique to Jackson State?**

ANGEL JACKSON: I say I'll remember our boot camp in preseason. That's the hardest time of our lives. We have to really get out there for a week straight, waking up 6:00 a.m. in the morning. We were rolling in dirt. We were in mud. It was like a real Army boot camp. I would say that made us stronger and prepared us for this moment because we knew not to back down. We knew we had to fight for what we wanted and we had to stay level-headed the whole game, the whole season. I would never take that away from my experience here at Jackson State.

TI'IAN BOLER: I would say boot camp as well because boot camp at Jackson State is really an under statement. The getting up early every day and then class and then you got to go to treatment and then find food in your body.

That's like a mental process, so I carried that on, the team carried that on and we knew that there was no stopping us after that because the boot camp, it was tough. It was real tough, but it was fun, though. It was fun because it's like team work. We were picking each other up, rolling through mud, flipping tires, we were racing, so, yeah.

MODERATOR: We have time for one more for the student-athletes. All right, ladies thank you very much.

T'IAN BOLER: Thank you.

MODERATOR: Questions for coach, right up front to Pat.

**Q. Coach, obviously you will get to see and read the comments later, but Coach Auriemma went on at length about you and your program and your league and the respect that you guys deserve, especially after what you did this season, so can you talk a little bit about representing your league and what you think your team did this season?**

TOMEKIA REED: You know, I really appreciate Coach for those wonderful words that he said. I'll get a chance to read it or see it later, but for me at Jackson State, you know, I wanted to put not only our university on the map. I wanted to put HBCUs on the map. We have such a special community that a lot of people overlook. We have a community that's not built on wins and losses but built on family and love. And, you know, I just want to be a great representation for that. When I came to Jackson State, I wanted to build a team that could be dominant in our conference but also a team that could be competitive outside the conference versus power five institutions and so I'm an advocate for HBCUs. I'm an advocate for our representation, our proper representation and I commend our coaches when they do a good job when they win big games because when they do well, it makes their entire conference look good. It makes all HBCUs do good when they do a good job. Grambling did a good job in beating a power five. Southern did a great job beating a top power five. Arkansas Pine Bluff did a great job beating a power five. We have some really good basketball and that's what it's all about. We want the best representation to come to the NCAA Tournament so we can brain an awareness of what we do and who we are and an awareness to our community and continue to hope that we can continue to grow the greatness within it.

MODERATOR: Questions? Right here on the right.

**Q. Natalie with The Next. Can you just talk about either a moment you're most proud for your team this season or the growth that you've seen over the course of this season?**

TOMEKIA REED: I'm really proud of our players for being determined to go back out and be successful this year. We were on a 43-win streak last year when we got our first loss and our players took that to heart. We also lost in the tournament last year and our players didn't take that to well. This team coming in this year were extremely tough, mentally tough and they were resilient. Going 21-0 was not easy by any measure. If it was easy, it doesn't matter the level. If it was easy, it would be done more across the country and so I'm just really proud of our players for being able to be resilient through tough times. People see the record but they don't know what we've gone through to get to what we were able to do this year. So this is a really special team. We had to lock out a lot of noise. We had to lock in and be focused on our vision. We had several distraction this is year but this team stayed the course.

Hats off to my staff as well. We don't have a good team, we don't have a solid team, we don't have a mentally tough team without a great staff and a great athletic director and great administrators so I'm just really proud of the team for being able to play with a target on our backs. Every game we played was a championship game. When teams made their runs, the fans cheered like it was a championship game. We had to push through that. So I'm just really proud of our players and the effort that they gave this year. Really special team. Out.

MODERATOR: We'll go back to Zoom. Rob, what's your question?

**Q. Hey, Coach. This is Rob. Phenomenal job with everything this year. My question is to a kind of along the lines of how you opened here with just the respect? Coach Vickers at Norfolk State last year walked into his locker room last year and said you shouldn't been a 16 seed, there were some great things to say about Norfolk State last night and Geno today. As coach, especially at this level, how important is it when coaches of that stature are using their platform to support the work that you're doing and making sure that it's also amplified beyond just the media?**

TOMEKIA REED: You know, it's really important and I'm extremely thankful that coaches are recognizing what we are able to do at this level. A lot of times it's not taken serious. A lot of times it's overlooked. What we do, we're doing the same thing with less. We're getting our players prepared to play at this level with a lot less than what these bigger schools have and to have these coaches call that moment out is a really good feeling. I'm extremely thankful for what the NCAA has done in terms of the rules that have been changed for our game to be more competitive and for

our game, collectively, to be more respected. Our numbers grew last year in the NCAA tournament because our players brought a lot of excitement to the floor. Women's basketball is what I'm talking about. A lot of excitement to the floor. The game is growing. We have pioneers like Coach Staley, Coach Geno giving these great words about our coaches but the game does not grow if all division one levels doesn't grow. If the lower levels don't grow, the game doesn't grow so we need coaches to continue to talk great things about us, we need to continue to build this level so the game of women's basketball can continue to grow.

I would love to see this tournament to go to a neutral site like men's basketball. We would have a better chance, teams coming in at the 16 seed, 15, 14 have a better chance to compete and not have those jitters and be on an even playing field, so I would love to see the game continue to grow to that, but overall, it's all about agreeing the game of women's basketball and having those big time coaches talk about us is phenomenal. It's outstanding and much appreciated.

MODERATOR: Question here on the right.

**Q. Coach, my question kind of goes along with the comments you just made. Have you had the chance -- I know you didn't get the outcome you wanted to do, but have you had the chance to think about what you truly brought to the game of women's college basketball and where it's going?**

TOMEKIA REED: You know, I haven't really had a chance to do that type of evaluation. I do know that I'm really proud that Jackson State University has made national attention. I'm really proud of the respect that people have for our program. I'm thankful. I just think collectively we are growing. You have the NCAA has put so many HBCU coaches and athletic directors on the NCAA committees. That's huge. I have been selected to be on the committee. Our voices are being heard. That's big. And so I'm just extremely proud to be a vessel. That's all I want to do is to be a vessel and continue to grow the game and I'm just really thankful for the space that has been provided. The good Lord has provided for us and we want to continue to grow the game.

MODERATOR: Question here on the left.

**Q. Timona Stapleton. Coach, you've had an amazing season. Undefeated in the SWAC and your motto is knock down walls. Do you feel like your season, you're out of conference where you were playing some of the bigger schools, you had a net ranking of 100. Do you feel like you are getting closer and closer to**

**knocking down those walls? Not just for Jackson State but those HBCUs that you were previously speak of?**

TOMEKIA REED: The ending of your statement is really important to me. The fight that I like to have for our university and for our conference and for the HBCU community is ongoing. If we're not knocking down walls, the walls are being knocked down in other areas and by other schools in the HBCU sports so I'm extremely thankful for that. People have come together and just respect, you know? That's all. We want the same opportunity that everybody else has and we have made a lot of noise in that area and for us, I think we have taken steps forward, we have gone back. That's the game of basketball. That happens. In regards to being undefeated in the conference, very proud of that. But I don't coach to win the SWAC. I coach to win out of conference. I teach to win the NCAA Tournament. I coach to win pre-season games against big schools. I coach to be in a top 25 AP poll, you know? Why not? Why not Jackson State? So that's why I coach. You have a lot of coaches who are now saying it does not matter where I am. This is what I want to accomplish. That, to me, is knocking down walls.

MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much and congrats on great season.

TOMEKIA REED: Thank you.

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