

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Southern vs UC San Diego

Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

Southern Jaguars

Coach Carlos Funchess

Aniya Gourdine

Soniyah Reed

Media Conference

Southern 68, UC San Diego 56

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, I thought our ladies came out and set the tone early knocking down shots. Soniyah Reed was unbelievable starting the game off. And Aniya, she kind of helped us close it out. But they did a great job starting the game off. We had a 20 point lead. I knew they were going to make a run at some point; I didn't know when the way they shoot the basketball.

But we did a great job of knocking down free throws and keeping our composure down the stretch.

Q. First of all, congratulations on two things.

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Thank you.

Q. If I am not mistaken, it's probably the first time we've had an HBCU out here in Southern California, so welcome. For your program, what does it do for you guys to know you'll be in the big, big dance come Friday night?

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, we been playing with a lot of the confidence, especially down the stretch. We played a lot of Power 4 schools early. I thought that that really helped us tonight, being able to go in and have some confidence.

We played well early in the season, but we didn't put four quarters together. A lot of times it was one quarter, sometimes it was two.

But we started playing good basketball down the stretch



and I thought we were hot going into the tournament.

Q. Most coaches, they like those tough games. Do you think these type of games are the games that your players can learn from?

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, yeah, I think they can learn from it, but we made some uncharacteristic mistakes I thought some in the fourth quarter. I don't know if it was fatigue or what.

But they did when they always do, they deliver. Coming down the stretch we toughened up, we never lost confidence, and finished the deal.

Q. What's it like for you young ladies to play in the NCAA tournament knowing that Friday night ya'll going to be taking on the UCLA Bruins?

ANIYA GOURDINE: It means everything. It's always what I dreamed up. This is my first time; this is Soniyah's second. This is what we dreamed of. We been talking about this moment since the summer, so it just means so much to me.

SONIYAH REED: Yeah, to piggyback off what she said, we are really excited to be here, and to win one of these games is really big for us, too. We talked about that as well. We're excited and ready to play on Friday. (Smiling.)

Q. What do you think is some of the things that you guys can take from this win and be able to apply it?

ANIYA GOURDINE: I would say playing up tempo and stopping the team, UCLA, from what they do best. We did that a lot today. We knew No. 3 was very good. Kudos to her. No. 22 was good. We tried to take them out of their comfort zone, and Friday be looking to do the same thing.

SONIYAH REED: Yeah, I would say the way we shared the ball today and also our defense. We are a defensive minded team, so going into Friday that's going to be a big thing for us, playing our defense.

Q. How do you like the weather out here in Southern



California?

ANIYA GOURDINE: Not what we expected. I was expecting some sun.

CARLOS FUNCHESS: It's a little colder than we expected.

Q. Normally be a little bit sunnier and warmer. Again, congratulations on a fine job.

ANIYA GOURDINE: Thank you.

SONIYAH REED: Thank you.

Q. What's up, ladies, Coach? First and foremost, congrats on the performance tonight. For all three of you, what does this win mean for you all? I know Soniyah when we talked a few weeks ago you mentioned legacy. Obviously being part of the first Southern women's basketball program to win an NCAA game, being the first SWAC women's basketball team to win a game in the NCAA tournament, obviously means plenty to you all. What does this moment mean to you all?

SONIYAH REED: This means the world to us, we worked for this. Since the summer we been working. This is what we do, this program. Our coaches, they believe in us. They never put doubt in us, always talk us up.

We come out and we deliver for them.

ANIYA GOURDINE: Yeah, to piggyback on Soniyah. It means a lot, and the most important thing is shining the light on the HBCUs, the SWAC, just showing we belong here and we can compete with the best.

Q. Aniya, what did you think of Soniyah's shooting tonight. I know you see it all the time in practice. To see her have a performance like that, what was this like for you?

ANIYA GOURDINE: I think at every press conference I have I mention Soniyah. She's a great player. It makes my job easier because I'm a player that can get into the lane. If I know -- now teams are not leaving her, but when they leave her I'm looking for her every time and I know it's going through the net.

She is an unbelievable player and even better teammate.

Q. Soniyah, for you, what did you see out there tonight? Came out the first quarter, knocked down your first shot, then got some confidence going. Share what you saw out there.

SONIYAH REED: Yeah, once I saw the first maybe one or two shots go in and coach kept calling my number, when he call my number, I'm going to deliver for him. Yeah, if they keep feeding me, yeah, I got to cook. I got to do what I have to do.

Yeah, I saw it going in and my confidence was just through the roof, so I was going to keep shooting it.

Q. How much experience from two years ago helped tonight? I mean, obviously I know this is a different team, just different, right? But you all just appeared to be a lot more relaxed tonight, like it's just another game. You all appeared to just be relaxed tonight. Was that something you talked to the team about going in?

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, I thought we were good enough in '23 to win this first game against Sacred Heart. I thought fatigue played a big part. We had just come off playing three extremely tough games in our conference tournament. We were just exhausted.

Started out the game pretty well. As it wore on, fatigue set in and we could not overcome that. Tonight we had a little bit more rest even though it was a long trip.

I thought we were ready. I mean, these young ladies have been working since June the 3rd with one goal in mind. That was to win that conference regular season, win the tournament, and get to this point and win a game.

So it's a historic night for us.

Q. How do you feel about that, Coach, with the history that you all made? Obviously the Southern program, one of the best programs in the country over the last several years. Obviously gets overshadowed a lot. Now you have this moment, this opportunity, what do you want people to know about Southern basketball and the success you've had? People know, but more people need to know.

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Not just Southern University but the entire league. Our league is a quality league. Last year we went and beat Oklahoma at Oklahoma and they ended up winning the Big XII.

So we have some quality teams in this league and coaches and play really good basketball. It's a tough league to win. And to win in the regular season and the tournament is extremely hard.

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