

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Southern Jaguars vs UCLA

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

Southern Jaguars Carlos Funchess Saniyah Reed Aleighyah Fontenot

Media Conference

CARLOS FUNCHESS: I'm just glad to be back to survive to play another game. I thought our young ladies came out and competed extremely hard last night and got the job done. They delivered. They put in the work this year and ended up getting a win last night. That was a historic win for us, and hopefully, we can keep it going.

Q. Take me through last night and just how much celebrating did you do before turning the page to UCLA?

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, the young ladies were really excited. If they were like me, I was flooded with text messages. Of course, you can't answer them all, but you try to hit most of them.

But they were really excited, and for a good reason.

Q. Saniyah, you're coming off a career high with 24 points. What do you think allowed you to get into such a good rhythm, and how do you continue this momentum going into tomorrow's game?

SONIYAH REED: I would say really just having confidence coming just straight into the game. I came off the bench. Once I got in the game, they called a play for me. I think just seeing that first shot go in, that kind of just -- I think it boosted me up a little bit. So I was like, I'm going to just keep shooting it.

Q. Was there something that you liked about shooting in this building? Would you say it's a shooter's gym?

SONIYAH REED: I definitely would say it's a shooter's



gym. The way I saw it going through the net, I was like, yeah?

Q. You played great defensively against UCSD. What's your approach of slowing down a team like UCLA who's capable of scoring at all three levels?

SONIYAH REED: I think I noticed that they like to get the ball inside a lot. We're a great defensive team, so I think today we're going to go through our scout. We're going to see what ways we can stop them, maybe keeping the ball on the outside, making them shoot a little more.

ALEIGHYAH FONTENOT: I think sometimes we can't completely stop what a team does. We can slow them down as much as we can, so that's what we're going to do. We're going to probably try to double-team inside a lot and try to make them kick it out and shoot a lot of perimeter shots.

Q. Coach, what are some overall keys to victory for tomorrow night's matchup, and what's your overall message to the team?

CARLOS FUNCHESS: We're going to come out and compete extremely hard and try to do the right things as far as execution-wise on both ends of the court. They're a great team. They're the No. 1 seed for a reason, and we're just going to come out and compete and try to have fun. That's the big thing, come out and give it 100 percent, and then when the scoreboard goes off, look up and see who won.

Q. What was it like for you playing in Pauley Pavilion for the first time?

ALEIGHYAH FONTENOT: You see these places on TV and it looks extremely big and it looks like a very good environment to play in, so just playing here, it felt amazing, and it was really fun.

SONIYAH REED: For me, I would say the same thing. It was really cool. It's a huge stadium. Like she said, we see this on TV a lot, so to be able to actually be able to step on the court and play, yeah, it was really cool.



Q. I know Coach talked a little bit about last night and this morning. Just take me through how overwhelming that was or how much did y'all feel the love of everybody rallying around your victory last night on social media and all the clips and stuff?

SONIYAH REED: I mean, after the game, my phone was going crazy. I had a lot of people congratulating me and stuff. You know, Jag Nation, we got the best fans in the world. They always show up for us. It was really cool. A lot of messages. I'm really thankful and I'm grateful.

ALEIGHYAH FONTENOT: And also, just apart from Jag Nation, people are a part of the SWAC and a bunch of HBCUs across the country, they all were supporting us. So it felt really amazing for everybody to come together for this special moment for us.

Q. Aleighyah, I never got a chance to ask you about this from two years ago, but obviously you hit one of the biggest shots in program history two years ago to get y'all to the tournament two years ago. As you wind down your career, take me through that shot, think back on it, and now that two years has passed, how much more significant is that basket for you, that game winner?

ALEIGHYAH FONTENOT: The shot, it was just an amazing feeling, like, even back then. I still think on it now. But now it's just like, okay, that was one thing, but now I'm like, okay, we're moving into this next moment, and this next moment feels even better.

Q. Coach, tomorrow go out and have fun; obviously, you've coached a long time and you've been in the NCAA Tournament, you've played No. 1 seeds before. How different does this one feel for you coming in, facing a team after a good feeling of a win?

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, you know as a coach, you always move on to the next game. We enjoyed it last night, but I was thinking last night after the game, what do we need to do to slow down UCLA? My mind immediately went to the next game.

Just looking at film and things like that, just getting prepared for the next game and trying to do the best you can, getting them prepped up, our team prepped up for the next game.

Q. Question for Aleighyah and Soniyah. How did you decide to go to Southern? What played into your decision to play basketball at Southern?

ALEIGHYAH FONTENOT: Just throughout the recruitment process, talking to Coach Funchess and Coach J and the rest of the coaches, it really felt like they cared about us as players, and I felt like going there, it would feel the best as a homey environment and everyone would get along because some players, they go somewhere and it's not really a good team chemistry, but all four years here at Southern has been a really good team chemistry.

SONIYAH REED: Yeah, I would say also through the recruitment process, getting to talk to them, they're really consistent in recruiting me. Yeah, I would say that I enjoyed speaking to them. They made me feel wanted, like they really wanted me. Also, I'm not far -- I'm from Slidell, so I'm not far from Southern. So it was cool to also have a chance to stay home, as well.

Yeah, just talking to the coaches, I knew I would have a great relationship with them, being able to meet some of the players when I was able to visit on games and stuff was really nice.

Yeah, I knew it was home from the beginning.

CARLOS FUNCHESS: Well, we're just going to come out and try to represent the SWAC conference well tomorrow night and come in and battle. That's all we ask the young ladies each and every game is, come out and give it 100 percent, and we'll see what happens after that.

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