

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UNC Greensboro vs USC

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Galen Center

UNC Greensboro Spartans

Trina Patterson

Nya Smith

Jayde Gamble

Media Conference

USC - 71, UNC Greensboro - 25

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome UNC Greensboro with Coach Trina Patterson and student-athletes Nya Smith and Jayde Gamble.

We'll ask Coach to make an opening comment. We'll then take questions from the student-athletes.

TRINA PATTERSON: I am really proud of our team. We came here to compete. We just were not going to play hard, and we knew that what we are really good at is defense. I thought we accomplished that today. The numbers, the shooting percentages, the fight and the rebounding, and also just the compete.

I thought our players played hard. I think they left it all on the floor. Really proud of Nya and Jayde. I do think that offensively we didn't hit the mark. Very, very, very good team with the size. So the size and the depth at the size bothered us.

But we got good looks at the basket. We needed to take better care of the ball. Ball security for us was not where we wanted it to be.

Our half-court, what we told our players in halftime was the half-court defense was green, it was thumbs up. Our transition defense wasn't where we needed it to be, but I'm really proud of our fight, our effort, and our defensive intensity.

Q. During the first quarter, you kind of kept USC off balance. What kind of went into that effort?



JAYDE GAMBLE: First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and savior, but to answer your question, I would say it was just the fight in us. We knew we had to try to kind of punch them as hard as we could, have the momentum on our side early because we knew they were coming.

It's all about managing the space we had and trying to keep tight numbers. We had a goal going into halftime to not let them score half their average, which we did do that. Of course we wanted to make some more buckets, but we did achieve our goal defensively.

NYA SMITH: I think we shocked them a little bit with like how we were sharing the ball and initially scoring in that first quarter. So I think that kind of threw off their equilibrium a bit. And, yeah, like Jayde said, just the effort on defense. We played with a lot of energy and contained them as best as we could.

Q. Can the two of you talk about the experience of actually playing in the NCAA Tournament and how that felt now that you've been through it?

NYA SMITH: This is just such a blessing to be able to play on this stage, for me especially as a freshman. Not a lot of freshmen get a chance to even make it to this point and even play in the game.

I'm just very grateful for the experience and to be able to do it with this group. I love this group of girls. This is such a special team. I'm grateful to have gotten to experience it with them.

JAYDE GAMBLE: I'm just blessed to be here with this group of girls. I'm blessed that Coach Pat brought me here from Wilmington. I just appreciate all our support staff and everything throughout the year. We made history at UNCG. It's something that nobody can take away from us no matter what people say.

Yeah, I'm just blessed to be in this position.

Q. Would you want to talk about your thoughts? Coach talked about USC. What were your impressions



of your opponent today?

NYA SMITH: They're a very, very, very skilled team. This was a good challenge for our group, but like I said, we met our defensive goals for sure. That's a testament to our character. We emphasize defense a lot. So they can't take that away from us.

Offensively we could have did more, but I'm proud of us no matter what. No matter who we play, I'm proud of us. That doesn't take away from who we are as a team.

Q. What improvements have you seen in yourself this season? Looking back at the beginning of the season and looking at who you are now as a player and a person, what improvements have you seen?

NYA SMITH: For me, I just feel a lot more confident. Coming in as a freshman, it's very different. The game is faster. Everybody's bigger. I just had to find my ground a bit in the beginning.

I'm here for a reason. Coach Pat brought me here to score, play defense, just do all the things I was doing before. So once I just kind of slowed my mind down and just let my preparation and training take over, I felt a lot more comfortable, and it showed going through nonconference and conference.

JAYDE GAMBLE: I think for me, when I came here my junior year, my role was more on the scoring side, like focus on scoring. I had a very dominant point guard that kind of carried the pace for us, so I didn't have to worry about some of the stuff that I had to worry about this year.

Going into this year, I knew my leadership role was going to have to expand, and I couldn't be quiet. I had to talk. So I think I've grown in my leadership and being able to impact the game other than just scoring.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse the student-athletes. Thank you for coming in.

Q. Talk about meeting the defensive goals and being like the No. 1 with defensive efficiency this season, what does that mean to you? Tell me about the talented team that's been able to maintain that during the season.

TRINA PATTERSON: Absolutely. So the first thing is our team operates in gratitude. We have core values that we see every day. We operate in gratitude. We operate with integrity. We just do the right thing because it's the right thing to do even when it comes to being in the position that we ask you to be in defensively.

We serve each other. So because we serve each other and we serve each other with love, like it really is hard when we know that we're going to lose players and all that they put in with a passion.

Then we're united. We're united in the locker room. We don't let things separate us.

Lastly, we operate in humility so that we can pour into our players and they can learn and get better. As you've seen, the defense gets better throughout the year. So they can't learn if they're full. So they're empty, and we pour into our players, and then they get better and better and better and better. Such has been our defense.

The goal was that they were going to score 39 points at halftime. That's below their average. The goal defensively was to make sure that certain players don't get their percentages. We've done that for many of the players on this.

We knew what we wanted to do. We were crowding or sending two people to No. 12, JuJu, very talented player. I thought that really threw her off, but she's seen that all year. But the fact that we have a 6'3" post who can strong hedge, we just thought we did a good job of maintaining her.

Likewise, we were going to be rim coverage with our bigs so she didn't have to guard 13 or guard 44 at the elbow. We knew that 44 likes to drive left. She went left once on us, and that was just a miscue on defense.

So all of that, they paid attention to that. Because of our core values and how we play, we know there's one thing that we can do well when we come in here. Our defense travels.

You can't control if you make shots on a day to day to day basis. That's for every player that plays the game. Sometimes things can affect your shot like size. Size, can't coach it, can't coach it. So 10 blocks, kudos to USC for really protecting the rim.

Jai usually makes these layups. She has good placement on the backboard. She has high accuracy, but today was different. So our offense was -- needed to be a lot better, but we had fight, fight, fight. That's who we are, and that's how we've managed to be able to hold teams to single digit quarters, but no one wants to shoot single digit quarters on the other end.

They did a great job on their defense also.

Q. I heard one of the players talk about making history this season. Tell me about this group, how special they are and how successful they've been this season.

TRINA PATTERSON: The history is it's been 27 years since we've come to the NCAA, and we have great administration. Our chancellor, athletic director, our department, our coaching staff. The history is the city of Greensboro is back there cheering us on, and we really appreciate, and we know that they've been at watch parties.

So the excitement of winning -- going undefeated in Fleming gym, we know that's a tough place to play. We have a mentally tough team, and we pride ourselves on our mental toughness, and we've been in situations where we've been down.

So the history is this is history. This is history. They know it. To be moving in this space in this day and this time is a blessing. Thankful for the opportunity to coach. Don't take it for granted. I do it because we love it. I love our team. We try to operate in excellence in everything we do, and it's a special time, a special place in this moment.

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