

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Georgia Tech vs South Carolina

Sunday, March 28, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Hemisfair

South Carolina Gamecocks

Laeticia Amihere

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

South Carolina 76, Georgia Tech 65

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by student-athlete Laeticia Amihere. We'll take questions.

Q. I was curious, seemed like you and Destanni came up big-time in the first half. How important was the bench play today and how much pride do you take in coming big in this big stage for you guys?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: It's very important, especially in a tournament right now, we got to come up big. We've got to come up big because the bench is a big part of who we are. Being able to go deep in our bench is going to be so important, especially down the stretch right now.

Q. You mentioned taking pride in the bench play. For yourself, how have you embraced the challenge issued to you over the last couple weeks without LeLe? Dawn has leaned more on you to provide what you are the last few games. How much have you embraced that challenge issued to you to deliver on this stage?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: First of all, thank you. I just think it's important to come out whenever my name's called. Coach trusts me to go out there and put in the work, so I have to be able to deliver whatever she needs me to do at that time. I have to be able to do that.

It definitely sucks. We were very sad that LeLe wasn't able to come up this tournament. It's a huge loss on our team. But being able to recover, keep going. During the season a lot of people are losing players, and it's who can adapt, who can move forward.

Q. Aliyah is obviously a big part of what y'all do. That



said, how much confidence does it give you as a team even when she goes scoreless in the half, you can have the lead, play pretty well?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: I think the thing with Aliyah, she's an all-around player. Look at the accolades. It's not only scoring, it's defense as well. Although she's not giving us some buckets on the board, she's doing so much more to give our team the boost that we need.

Obviously she's going to score her points. You see that in the second half. She gives so much more to the team, even though she's not scoring, we're still able to feel her presence.

Q. Can you just talk about what you saw out there on the court today. You looked very confident, very sure of yourself, very decisive going to the basket. Talk about your role and how much more comfortable you seem to feel with each game in this NCAA tournament.

LAETICIA AMIHERE: Yeah, it's definitely high-level play. So I think just adjusting to high-level play, not overthinking. I think that's a big thing for me. Just being decisive and giving my team what they need.

We have great preparation at practice. I think it starts in practice. I have that confidence just working hard. Our team competes really hard during practice. Being able to translate that in the game was really important for me this tournament. I think I've been able to do that.

Q. Did you feel like when Aliyah got in foul trouble that you were going to really have to step up in a big way today if you were going to advance? Along with that, too, do you feel like this is your best game you've ever played at South Carolina? You had 15 points, seven rebounds, no missed layups, no missed free throws.

LAETICIA AMIHERE: Yeah, so I think with Aliyah, she gives so much to our team. Definitely when she's out, when she's in foul trouble, I have to step up. Everybody has to step up and give what she's missing.

In terms of that, we just try to surround her and help her



out. I'm happy she had a great second half, as well. Moving forward I know she's going to kill it with the games coming up.

In terms of the second question, I think that I would agree it was my most focused game. I think just working on being focused and zoned-in every game, I think in that aspect it was my best game in that aspect.

Q. From a more personal standpoint, how tough has it been for you to keep your focus on helping this team, knowing someone you care about deeply is going through a battle right now? How much has she meant to you throughout your journey?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: I think she's just a pillar of perseverance. I mean, I wrote on my shoe, to play for her. But she's a pillar of perseverance.

Whenever I know I'm tired, I'll tap my shoe. Just gives me a boost of confidence. Whenever I was going through injuries, whenever I was going through something that was tough during basketball, I just remember her resilience. That would just give me automatic boost, automatic power to just keep going.

It's definitely tough. But my teammates make it so much easier for me, and also my coaches.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, you guys were able to dominate points in the paint today. At one stretch you had 18 points from behind the arc. Just talk about you guys being able to get positioned there down low in the post.

LAETICIA AMIHERE: Yeah, I think we're a team that has a lot of speed and height. They tend to pack it in a lot. Being able to play inside and out is going to be huge for us. We knocked down shots today, which is great. It helps us just move the ball and get great flow. When we're able to knock shots down behind the arc, we're able to penetrate as well.

It's a great balance. I'm glad we're getting the groove of that.

Q. What would you talk about Saxton, what she brings to the team on and off the court?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: Man, she's a ball of energy. She does all the little things that people think they're little things. She works so hard. She works so hard on defense, she works so hard on offense. She gives us that boost we need every single game, day in, day out. I'm just so happy to see her play. How hard she works, it boosts all of us to

keep working hard and lock in.

Q. After two knee injuries in high school, then last year having to play with the huge brace and missing time for Team Canada, do you finally feel like you're back to playing at the high level you were before the injury? How confident are you? It looked like last time you were kind of measuring for a dunk, and you eased up. Do you feel back to 100%?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: Yeah, I'm definitely getting there. Definitely. I feel a lot better. I'm moving a lot better. I'm just happy that I'm at this stage right now. Just got to keep going.

Q. Throughout the game it kind of seemed like there were a few moments where it looked like you guys would pull away, going on some runs. Georgia Tech kind of kept it close throughout the game. What were they doing after those runs to keep it so close for so long?

LAETICIA AMIHERE: I mean, it's the Sweet 16, so every team is going to bring their all. We knew that coming into the game it wasn't going to be just a cakewalk, it was something we were going to have to work towards to get.

Yeah, they just bring that intensity. They were leaking out, making some shots. We definitely had to adjust to that. We knew we were not going to be shaken up because this is the Sweet 16 and every team is going to give their best.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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