

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

## North Carolina Tar Heels

## Coach Courtney Banghart

## Reniya Kelly

## Alyssa Ustby

### Postgame Press Conference



North Carolina 60, Florida State 56

COURTNEY BANGHART: You guys were all treated to a really good college basketball game. There's no one who watched that game and didn't think these were two of the better teams in the country.

Man, Florida State is formidable. They've got elite talent. They've got versatility. They've got great coaching. That's just a really tough team to beat. We knew we were going to have to bring our best, and we did that.

I felt like our guys really took care of -- they want it their way, and we talked about winning it our way, and what this group has become -- you know, every team at this point in the season has their identity, and there's a toughness to this group and a togetherness to this group and a courage to this group that was on display tonight.

I'm really proud to be next to two of our guys that have been such a huge part of this team, and I'm sure they're ready to talk about what just happened.

**Q. Coach, you held Ta'Niya Latson to 13 points, including one point in the third quarter. What was the game plan? I know we talked about allowing their last play to a low, as well. What was that game plan? The big shot in the closing seconds, how happy were you to see her shoot that last shot?**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, tough. Well, first thing, you said what did I do. These guys get all the credit. Latson is a perennial top 2, top 3 WNBA pick if she came out this year, much less next year.

What I did was try to give us a game plan that we could execute and asked our bigs to sort of be really crowdly, which meant our backside had to be really present. Then we needed to chest up. They do a lot of slipping, and so if you get to the ball screen coverage before the ball screen, you're going to be in trouble, and our guys just were totally locked in.

We did a scout last night. We redid it this morning and kind of quizzed them on how we wanted to defend it, and they held it to a tee. That's a really good player.

Your second question how I am of proud Reniya Kelly? Talk about a dog, right? She's been itching to play, but she's been leading this team from the bench. To see her come in and be what we need when we need it is just Reniya Kelly.

This is I think one of the best point guards in the country. I thought that last year when I started her as a freshman. But she just continues to mature and continues to play to her personality, which makes our team better. I'm super proud of her. I'm really glad she's here.

**Q. For those of us who don't know, there was a factor of revenge in today's game or something you had to get done, and you did it. What set that in motion?**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Well, the revenge was that we -- Latson hit a game winner at our place. That's at home, and that's a game winner after we thought we had played well enough to win, and we totally missed our coverage on that last possession.

So the revenge was that it sits in their mouth. What did I do? I just sort of look Alyssa in the eye and I say, do you remember? That's all you have to say to Alyssa, and then she takes care of the rest.

She had her teammates totally prepared, ready, playing with the urgency of a senior. That's really an Alyssa question, I think.

**Q. You talked yesterday about Alyssa --**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, she's good.

**Q. -- basically brow beating you to get back on the court. Is Reniya the same way?**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Oh, yeah. Reniya is a little bit more subtle about it, which sometimes -- it's like when your dad is mad at you it's way worse than when your mom is mad at you. Alyssa just in my face and Reniya just gives me that look, and it's like, I know.

But they also know that this team really wants to do something special in March. We trust our bench, and she needed the time that she needed to be better now, and it proved right.

The hard decision -- she wants to play every minute of her season, right? But she trusts us, she trusts our sport performance team. She knows we're not holding kids out unnecessarily. We're making sure that they're at their best when we need them.

**Q. For all three of you, can you address the defense? You held Florida State to a season low 56 points and you're now 25-0 when you hold a team under. Just talk about the defensive effort today, please?**

ALYSSA USTBY: Yeah, our defensive effort really came from our preparation and our individual buy-in. I felt like we were always on the same page defensively, and when our five are feeling like that, we are really a hard team to score on. We also carry a lot of pride with our defense.

We don't take it lightly when somebody scores on us. We're frustrated. We're going to figure out why they scored on us and we're going to fix it the next time down. That's just how competitive this group is.

COURTNEY BANGHART: This is one of the best offensive team, if not the best offensive team, in the country, and 56 points and us rebounding 53 times is what was needed.

Honestly, it's what was needed. Super proud of them because that's just not an easy team to hold the way that we did.

**Q. Can you speak to the defense specifically on Latson? Also, Alyssa, it's pretty dangerous to say you want some smoke before the game. You obviously had to have a lot of confidence. Can you speak to that comment prior to this game?**

ALYSSA USTBY: Those specific words actually never came out of my mouth. I'm all for it, but that's just kind of

like what journalists do, looking for a story.

So I was like, great, you can run with it. But I was saying when I was on live TV, they were asking me about the FSU matchup and I was saying this is one that we are really looking forward to, because we lost on our home court in front of our friends, our family, our alumni, off of a buzzer beater.

Again, this group is competitive and we have pride, especially on our home floor. I was like, that hasn't sat right with us for long, so to get another opportunity at a team like that, that's something that we really look forward to, and we're not going to take that opportunity for granted.

Call it smoke, call it whatever, but we did have a lot of confidence because we knew our preparation would help us take care of it.

COURTNEY BANGHART: You've just got to love her, right? That's who she is. She wanted to ask about Latson. Latson, like I said, we just wanted to make sure that we chested up on the ball. We've got great elite defenders, on-ball defenders, but we needed our second line to be also elite. So we wanted to be high in the gaps. We wanted our taggers, which is the backside D, to be really present and accountable.

So you're basically guarding one and a half when Latson is on the team. Everybody, right? And our guys did that.

I think when we watch that back, we'll be pleased about our angles the whole night, whole day. I guess it's only the day still.

**Q. Reniya, you were 3 of 12 before that last minute when you made those two shots. What does that show about your trust in your shot and how you're feeling coming back?**

RENIYA KELLY: First off, I would risk my whole body to be on the court with my team, so my body told me I couldn't play, and I didn't play. I listened to my body, so it is what it is.

But I'm going to trust the process. I'm going to trust the work that I put in with my shot. Obviously I missed a lot of shots tonight, but that didn't down my confidence or make me hesitant about it, so I just kept shooting and trusting my work that I put in.

COURTNEY BANGHART: Remember the baseline out of bounds looking at the rim?

RENIYA KELLY: Yeah.

COURTNEY BANGHART: I mean, she had two huge finishes in that game.

**Q. Reniya, I'm curious what stat made you have that reaction as you were sitting down? When you sat down you looked at the stat sheet and went, ooh, or whatever. What was giving you that reaction?**

RENIYA KELLY: I just missed a lot of shots. I just don't like missing a lot. But it's okay. I'm going to do better next game.

Alyssa, she had how many? 18 rebounds. That's ridiculous.

ALYSSA USTBY: I know we didn't have a ton of O-boards, but between me and Maria almost ten O-boards. We keep encouraging our guards to shoot, because her and I love to crash for rebounds. Sometimes like you probably have seen, it's a two-way thing.

**Q. Courtney, we've been asking you minute by minute updates on your injured players before this tournament. I know that you're focused on winning games, but there is a big picture about hosting and being healthy going into the tournament. I'm curious, can you take a breath to be a little bit of a sigh of relief that they're on the court, they're playing, and you guys are whole again?**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Absolutely, yeah. I trusted them. I trusted them that we can -- we'll be able to host. You've just got to get to the semis, and they did. That's another top Quad 1 win against one of the best teams in the country.

I think our work has spoken for itself. A lot of credit to our bench. They've also been what we've needed while these guys have rested.

But yeah, full strength for any team this time of year is rare, and we're certainly glad to be back to full strength.

**Q. Courtney, Alyssa took that really hard fall in the second half, fell right on her shoulder, but I don't believe she came out for the entire rest of the game. What can you say about her toughness, especially coming back from an extended absence like she had?**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Big time. She played 36 minutes really hard only her second game back. This program for five years has gotten a rare treasure in getting a kid like Alyssa who will do anything for her team.

College basketball, you can say what you want about it, it's never going to be about anything besides the players who play it and those that support it. For everyone who watches Alyssa Ustby play it's a treat, and I've gotten to do it every day for five years.

I'm thrilled for you guys that you get to see that toughness because we see the, like, so exhausted at times we and she still runs. We see that offensive tip-out on the free throw yesterday when she was tired.

But she's a treasure. I think those who have played with her and those who have coached her and those who have watched her, that's the word you think of when you think of Alyssa.

**Q. Courtney, first quarter there were seven different scorers and then four different in double figures. How dangerous is this team when you have such balanced scoring?**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Big time. We've got to win our way, and that's how we're going to do it. We've got to respond to how they're defending. I thought we picked on matchups well. I thought we trusted each other well and continued to go to Reniya and Maria, two of our kind of main horses.

Yeah, you have to win your way. You don't win 27 games by mixing up who you are all the time. These guys stuck to who they are. We have a shot differential that's pretty spread out because that's what the game calls for.

**Q. Alyssa, you are in many ways the face and the heart of this team and you love this school so much. What is the drive to get to host meant to you, and how do you feel about what you've accomplished?**

ALYSSA USTBY: Yeah, this drive to host has been something that has been really my center focus for a long time when it comes to the opportunity to do it because of the community that we have back in Chapel Hill. There are so many families with kids and all these supporters that we have, and as somebody that is trying her best to lead this group, I just want to give it back to the people that continue to fill Carmichael and make playing basketball at this school such a special experience.

I've always felt a sense of pride, and I've been trying to take responsibility of getting that opportunity to bring it back home to Chapel Hill.

COURTNEY BANGHART: I want to real quick add to that. I almost thought about starting her or senior night even though she wasn't cleared necessarily because I wanted

her to get that ovation one more time. I looked at a couple of our guys and I was like, you have to find a way to host. You have to find a way to keep winning so that that kid can have one more, two more chances to get that.

**Q. Coach, two quick ones. I know you don't know who you're going to play, but can you talk about the possibility of playing NC State here in the state, in a semifinal, what that would mean, and tied 54-54 did you draw up a play for Reniya? Is that what happened? What were you looking for? She obviously made the shot.**

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, the first question is it would be great if the ACC wants to give a cut to the tickets to the two schools because we're doing y'all a favor here having two North Carolina schools, if NC State is to advance.

Yeah, I felt like to get to 54, we were able to go to Alyssa on an iso to the high post. Western able to get Indy on a rip and go, and it was time for Reniya to do what she does.

So yeah, we drew up both of those for her. It makes me look really smart when she makes them.

**Q. How have the last few games been having to sit? You missed a few your freshman year, but it was tougher this time because you were playing so well and you've been such an integral part of this team.**

RENIYA KELLY: Oh, it was very depressing to say the least. I really want to play with my team and go to war with them every night. Just to be on the bench was really sad for me, but I did cheer them on every time.

But I've been working to try and get back, and now I'm back, and it's time to win games.

COURTNEY BANGHART: How about our 17 year old making those big free throws? She should be in class today in high school, but she made two big free throws.

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