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South Carolina – 74
LSU – 54

An interview with:

**COACH DAWN STALEY
TINA ROY
OLIVIA GAINES**

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by South Carolina head coach and student-athletes Tina Roy and Olivia Gaines.

Questions.

Q. Olivia, you don't get a lot of minutes. When you come in, you always seem to make an impact. After the first 15 minutes, what was your mindset?

OLIVIA GAINES: Pretty much I have to get stops, just trying to help my team. Like coach said, always be ready. I was ready at that moment. I just brought the energy.

Q. Dawn, I know your résumé continues to grow over the years. I know how frustrating last year was. We heard the celebration in the hallway. What does it mean for you to get to the championship game?

COACH STALEY: It means that we're doing the right things. We're doing it the right way. Sometimes doing it the right way requires you to be a little bit more patient than we would like.

It takes time to get to this point. I thought we played extremely well all season long. We used our depth out there today.

But it means that our program is continuing to grow. It's a little bit more popular to come to South Carolina because we can tell people that they'll play in SEC championships, to win SEC tournament championships, which is something we want to do. That's what young people want to see. They want to see you tangibly win. This affords us that opportunity.

Q. Coach, talk about what happened offensively. You shot 31% for most of the first half, finishing with 80% from the field. Outside of making more shots, what changed offensively to create opportunities to score?

COACH STALEY: Well, we picked up our defense. We got some easy buckets created by the pressure that we put on LSU. You look at Olivia Gaines who spearheaded that pressure. She got us some steals. She just gave us some much-needed energy, a boost of energy that our team needed.

From that energy, we were able to get some easy buckets. Once we start making shots, it became contagious. Our low post players started scoring in the paint. Outside shooting, Tina Roy in particular, started knocking down shots. When we gain that momentum, it's hard to offset that.

Q. Girls, Tiffany was out of part of the first half because of foul trouble. Does that throw you off when she's not out there? How do you respond when she's struggling?

OLIVIA GAINES: We pick each other up. We have enough to build each other. Other people just stepping up.

COACH STALEY: We're not fazed as much by Tiffany Mitchell not having a great night because of the depth we have on our basketball team.

Last year I don't think we win this basketball game because our bench wasn't as I wouldn't say strong, they just didn't get enough playing time.

This particular year, they've been in situations where they had an impact on the game. They can draw on those experiences if Tiffany Mitchell had a night like tonight.

Q. Coach, 47 points in the second half. The SEC Player of the Year only finishes with four. What does that say about the rest of your

team?

COACH STALEY: Every time we take the floor, I always (indiscernible) key to winning each and every game is our bench production. I do believe we have the best bench in the country. We insert that confidence in them because we feel that way. We truly feel like that. To have our Player of the Year not have the best night, we were really encouraged about who we were able to bring off the bench. We called their number, and they answered that number time and time again.

Depth plays a really big part of any three-day tournament. Obviously it paid big dividends for us tonight.

Q. Tina, the thoughts were there throughout, but you were left shaking your head after you missed a couple in a row. How did it feel when you started nailing them?

TINA ROY: It felt good. But like coach said, if you're a shooter, never stop shooting.

The second half my teammates encouraged me to keep shooting the ball, and they started falling.

Q. Tina, seems like you always hit a couple threes against LSU. Something about playing your home state team?

TINA ROY: Well, that could be a reason. I'm from Louisiana, so I like playing against them. That could be a reason.

Q. Tina, does the team have a nickname for you for what you can do outside? You're able to fill it up at any moment and get hot?

TINA ROY: Sniper. Snipers usually don't miss. I miss some, but I guess I make them when they count, so there you go.

Q. Do you feel like tomorrow's game is for a number one seed in the tournament? Do you worry about that too much? Do you think you've done enough to get that?

COACH STALEY: I have no idea. Obviously if you look at some of the predictors, maybe some of the predictors think tomorrow is for a number one seed.

I just need to remind people that we play in the best conference in the country, the best conference in the country. Both Tennessee and our program, we've done better than we did last year. We've done better. We both got number one seeds.

I'm not saying Tennessee is going to win tomorrow. But if you're looking at the top teams in this conference, you look at what we were able to do last year, for us to get in the championship, we did a little bit more than we did last year, so...

Hopefully it will be a great championship game no matter who wins out there.

Q. Coach, what was your message at halftime?

COACH STALEY: Well, I was pretty calm. I think over the course of 40 minutes we relied on our depth. I told our team we're probably going to shake up the lineup a little bit and get people out there with a little bit more energy to start the second half.

For our team, we've been preaching sacrifice all season long. Here was an opportunity for three of our starters to come off the bench in the second half. They were okay with it.

When you're able to trust your coaches and your teammates to get the job done, it makes for a great situation. And they delivered. It makes everything look like it was the right call to make.

Q. I know we don't know the opponent yet, speak a little bit about Kentucky and Tennessee, what challenges they would present to you.

COACH STALEY: Kentucky and Tennessee are two of the most storied programs in our conference. They've had tremendous success.

I hope they go to quadruple overtime.

But to play any of those teams is always going to be a challenge. Kentucky just beat us at their place on Sunday. Tennessee took us to the wire at our place.

We're looking forward to it being a competitive championship. Hopefully other teams play as well as they do. If they shoot like they did in the second half, I like our chances.

Q. Tina with a lot of minutes at the point, is it Khadijah with her finger or...

COACH STALEY: At this point Tina is playing some good basketball. We could go with the lineup just because it's the lineup or we can take advantage of what players are doing out there on the floor.

We prefer to win basketball games. Tina gives us a good offensive option. She's a big guard that can see over some defenses.

But it's nothing against what contributions Khadijah gives us.

Q. Dawn, how far would you say Alaina Coates has progressed in the repertoire of moves you feel she can do and your general assessment of how she's progressed as a sophomore?

COACH STALEY: Honestly, I really haven't seen Alaina make the moves that are in her repertoire. I work with her almost every day. The moves that she's able to make, the mobility that she has, she is not able to do that in games because they collapse on her so much.

But for her to be able to score with two and three people around her constantly, I'd say she's progressing nicely. Now we have to give her an opportunity to make some moves while being collapsed on time and time again.

But for her not to get frustrated, for her to deliver the way she did tonight I think is only going to be a confidence booster for all of us.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, ladies, thank you very much.

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