

2016 NCAA® DIVISION I WOMEN'S SOCCER CHAMPIONSHIP

First-Round · #1 South Carolina vs. Colorado

Stone Stadium · Columbia, S.C.

Thursday, November 17, 2016

POSTGAME QUOTES

South Carolina head coach Shelley Smith

"Well, we're thrilled to be moving on. We're very excited for this opportunity. I thought it was another tremendous game from our team. We knew we'd have quite a matchup in Colorado, and huge credit to them. They had a tremendous season and gave it their all. Obviously it was an exciting and stressful match. I thought both teams had great chances, and we came up with the win. Congratulations to Colorado on a tremendous season, but we're very happy to be moving on tonight."

On what she saw that led to Colorado's defensive stand

"We knew coming in, they had been very solid all year defensively and that we had to find a way to get behind them. We knew we had to take advantage of wide areas. They did a good job to not give Savannah much room in the middle. A lot fell on Sophie [Groff] and Daija [Griffin]'s shoulders, that wide to get service in the box and our outside backs to get involved. Our midfield did a wonderful job to switch the point of attack and find open players, but I thought we figured it out a bit better in the second half. That's when we started creating a little bit more opportunities and chances. Even in the first half, we almost put it in the net a few times. It was hard to break them down and great credit to the team to come out in the second half and do what we needed to do.

On what changed after we started controlling the ball in the 1st half

"I thought we controlled play for a majority of tonight. I think in the first half, we weren't being as aggressive offensively with our possession, but we kept the ball. I think in that second half, we did a better job of finding ways to get behind them. We still had possession. It was just a little bit more aggressive in our attack, and that paid off.

On Savannah McCaskill opening up other areas with off-ball play

"The defense has to worry about her all the time. When she has the ball at her feet, she finds a way to find an open player. If she runs behind, she's trying to slash across teams. She's getting out wide to get looks for service. She finds a way to open up the game, and Colorado did a good job, especially in that first half, to limit opportunities for her to face the goal. I thought that in that second half she did a better job to open up and turn her face. Credit to all the players that started to be a bit more dangerous so that gave her a little bit more freedom as well."

On setting the single season wins record, among other things

"I'm not even sure of the records at the moment, to be honest. But, you know, when you're in the middle of it, all you're thinking about is definitely the next game. I'm so proud of this team

and what they've done all year. I keep saying 'you don't really enjoy it or understand what you've done until you can reflect upon it.' Looking back at our regular season, I've tried to reflect a bit, and I think it's amazing. We're all so focused on the run and meeting our own expectations of doing well. This team has shown all year they can find a way to win and they can play against the best. Soccer is a crazy game; sometimes it doesn't go your way. You may play an opponent such as this team, that's why I think it's so amazing that they found a way to be undefeated through the regular season. Now, we need to build on that as we go through the postseason because, like Sophie had mentioned, they fight to the end, they believe they can win, and that's a big piece of being successful."

On what we already know about BYU

"Well, we had a chance to watch them today, so we're a lot more familiar than we were. We know they're a tremendous team. They've got one of the most dangerous attacks you can find in college soccer, and I think we're probably known most for our defense, and that's why I think it's going to be a great matchup. This year, our attack has been tremendous, and a lot has to come from our defensive effort, and we've been able to build off of that. I think it's a great matchup, and we understand that any opponent in these rounds is going to be difficult. We've got to be very solid defensively and make sure we take advantage of anything that a team gives us. We'll have our hands full with BYU. They're well respected, and they've been a top team for several years. We're excited about the opportunity to be playing them here at home."

Mikayla Krzeczowski

On deciding which way to go on a breakaway in the 2nd half

"I just reacted. I was set and saw it coming right at me but didn't have time to throw my hands to it, so I just got it wide, and Kayleigh Kurtz was right there to clean it up."

Senior forward Sophie Groff

On deciding on who was taking the penalty shot

"I kind of got a cramp. We have a few people who take the PK's, so sometimes we rotate, but usually it's 'if you're feeling it, you go.' It's just kind of a feeling that you have. After I got my cramp, I got stretched out and was like 'It's mine, I want it.' So I was just feeling it, and my whole team has a lot of faith in me."

On the gratification of scoring on the penalty kick

"The thing is, with our team, we're fighters. We had a whole bunch of opportunities that we weren't able to put in the back of the net, so even at halftime; we wanted to keep pushing forward. To actually see the ball go in the back of the net was a great feeling. We knew it was coming, and it was just fortunate enough it was a PK and not in the run of play. But we were feeling it and knew it was coming, we just had to get to that point."

On whether the offense was missing opportunities or the Colorado defense was strong

"I wouldn't even say it was a slow offensive start. I think their goalkeeper had an amazing game. She made some really good saves off the line, so, again, all credit to Colorado. Like Shelley said, they're a very good team and their defensive unit was very strong. We were able to find those

opportunities but not put it in the back of the net because I do give a lot of credit to them. We have been a very offensive team, especially since the first round. We can't find the back of the net and they kind of took it to us on that."