



## 2015 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Colonial Life Arena · Columbia, South Carolina

South Carolina vs. Syracuse

Sunday, March 22, 2015

### POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – SOUTH CAROLINA

#### **Dawn Staley, South Carolina Head Coach:**

##### *Opening Statement*

I thought we came out ready to play and take on a very good Syracuse basketball team. I thought our players had a certain determination to get it done, to take care of things at home and obviously the outcome was just that. The entire atmosphere was an incredible college basketball game. I'm hoping our players cherished this moment because it was very special not only by their play, but by the people that came out and supported us in great numbers.

##### *On the post game*

I think we're a really balanced basketball team. I think a lot of what we've been trying to accomplish all season long is to pound the ball inside so we can have clean looks like we could have on the perimeter. It is comforting to know that our perimeter players get in the gym and work extra so when they're put in a position where they need to score for us, nine times out of ten they get the job done for us.

##### *On enjoying the moment*

You have to enjoy the journey. I think you've got to enjoy the moment. This program has only been to the Sweet 16 ... four times. Yes, for us it's like putting on an old shoe, but you have to enjoy the journey every step of the way because you never know when you're going to get back here. We want to continue to get back here but continue to understand, and count our blessings because it is a blessing to be able to advance.

#### **Aleighsa Welch, South Carolina Forward:**

##### *On playing her last game at Colonial Life Arena*

"With it being my last game, it was bittersweet at the start of the game, but I didn't want it to be my last game, period, in a South Carolina uniform. It's sad knowing I'm not going to be able to play on this court anymore, but we have a bigger picture for our season."

#### **Asia Dozier, South Carolina Forward:**

##### *On adjusting to Syracuse's Defense*

We definitely prepared for them to sag on us and zone in on our post players. Coach [Staley] has been in our ears about knocking down open shots and that's exactly what they were. Being patient, working the ball, and moving their zone and being ready to shoot when it got to a low shot clock.

#### **Alaina Coates, South Carolina Center:**

##### *On changing up the offensive sets*

They packed it in on us when we played them earlier in the season. We just came up with scenarios and made sure that we had options and different types of plays to where we'd be able to find the open man whether it be on the outside or the inside. Obviously with the points in the paint, we did find the inside man a lot. We were just able to get great position and be able to finish our shots.



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### POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – SYRACUSE

#### **Quentin Hillsman, Syracuse Head Coach:**

##### *Opening Statement*

Obviously South Carolina played a tremendous basketball game. They get a lot of credit. They came out early and made some shots and made threes early and we knew that if they came out and started making threes, we were going to have a problem, so we had a problem. They came out and they made some shots. I thought early in the basketball game, we did some things, in the first three or four minutes, of what we were trying to do. We really wanted to pressure the ball, but just like that, the fouls are 7-1, so we've got to stop pressing. You really can't get up and be physical and be aggressive and pressure when you have seven fouls...it kind of took our aggressiveness away a little bit when you have players on the bench with fouls. Overall, you've got to give Dawn [Staley] a lot of credit. She had a great game plan. She came out and her players didn't make shots the first time against us (earlier this season in the Bahamas) that are capable shooters, came out the second game, tonight, and made shots. All the credit goes to them. As far as my team, love them to death because they compete with anybody to the highest level. They don't play scared. They don't play conservative. We could have sat back and just let them come down and take 35 seconds off the shot clock and it would have looked good on the ticker but we wanted to compete and keep fighting and keep playing hard the entire game. We're not going to lay down and submit to anybody. That's not how we do it at Syracuse. We're going to compete the whole game. I thought our kids gave it everything they had. These are my kids. These are my daughters. When they hurt, I hurt. Like I said last game, when they don't play well, I take it personal. When they play well, I give them a lot of credit. They give it everything they have. As you can see, I gave everything I have. I went to the locker room and everyone should feel how I feel, have nothing left, and we've got nothing left. As far as I'm concerned, our season was a great success because if we had a game tomorrow we couldn't play. Because we ain't got nothing left. So I'm very proud of them.

##### *On South Carolina early shooting success*

It was tough. We knew they had two shooters: [Tiffany] Mitchell and [Asia] Dozier. So we knew that they were going to make shots. We weren't confused about that. I thought that what it did, for us, is it made us start to come out a little bit and increase their points in the paint and that's where they really took control, was the points in the paint. Obviously we didn't make any shots...we had to go out and start guarding them. When you look at, between [Mitchell and Dozier], they made five of their eight threes. They can shoot the ball, and more importantly, they shoot 62 percent in the first half and we shoot 25 percent in the first half, you're going to lose that game.

##### *On if he would have changed opening game plan*

Not at all, because when we started the game, I think [the score was] 5-7. I think we were actually up, so no I wouldn't change it all. When you're playing a game and you're best players are on the bench with fouls, it's tough and that's it. We played about 25 minutes without our starting center in the game and that's their strength, is their interior game. Our center [Briana Day] didn't play. She played 20 minutes, she played five minutes in the first half. It's tough to win that way.

**Cornelia Fondren, Syracuse Guard**

*On South Carolina's home-court advantage*

When we were in the Bahamas we didn't really have a crowd of our own...but I think being in their home, it gave them a lot of energy.

**Alexis Peterson, Syracuse Guard**

*On South Carolina's early run*

It was very difficult. We're playing in front of a large crowd so they were able to feed off their crowd's energy and really grind and it kind of slowed us down and we got really stagnant and it played to their advantage.

*On building for next season*

I think it's great for us. We're a young group of girls so we'll probably have our whole team coming back...we're going to have the type of chemistry that most teams won't have going into next season. We might as well build off this loss and learn from it.