



2015 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Colonial Life Arena · Columbia, South Carolina

South Carolina vs. Savannah State

Friday, March 20

POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – SOUTH CAROLINA

Dawn Staley, South Carolina Head Coach:

Opening Statement

"We got off to somewhat of a rocky start from a defensive standpoint. We fouled a little bit too much in the first half. In the second half I think we made some defensive adjustments to slow them down and not give them as many shots at the basket. Overall, I was happy with the atmosphere and tremendously happy with the outcome."

On the defensive adjustments

"Well, the adjustments we made is an adjustment I really didn't like. Sometimes you have to go against what you like to get wins and to get stops. We went to a more saggy defense because we had trouble keeping them in the front of us. So, we sagged and stayed a little tighter to [Ezinne] Kalu. We really didn't have her under control all game long. I thought it really made them think a little bit. We have to move the ball more. They put their heads down and got going and it worked in our favor."

On the team's dynamic

"Our depth is a big part of who we are, just like our experience is a big part of who we are. I think when each and every person does their job, you know, does what they have done for us now for 33 games, we're a really hard team to be reckoned with. They're staying in character and doing what they've done more times and that will win basketball games."

Aleighsa Welch, South Carolina Forward:

On playing at home

"It was very exciting. We didn't get off to the start we wanted to. When we had some drops the crowd really picked us up when we needed it the most. I think our crowd did exactly what we needed them to do. It was a lot of energy in this building and you could tell it was March. It was exciting getting on the court and seeing that we carried over that same support we had in the regular season."

Khadijah Sessions, South Carolina Guard:

On her thoughts before the team's second half run

"Just push the tempo. We needed to get up and down the floor. We need something to get the game moving a little bit faster and open up the game. I just knew it had to come from making defensive stops and transition. Coach [Staley] is always saying we have to push the ball and transition and that's what I did."

A'ja Wilson, South Carolina Forward:

On playing in her first NCAA tournament

"It was great, it was great. Just to go out there with these girls and get that win for my first March Madness game, it was huge. I had a lot of fun out there"



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POSTGAME PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – SAVANNAH STATE

Cedric Baker, Savannah State Head Coach:

Opening statement

First of all, I want to thank everyone for coming out. I thought coming into the game today we had a pretty decent game plan. I want to commend my student-athletes, we put in an offense within a matter of five or 10 minutes today that I thought, for a half, put us in a position to keep it respectable. [We] kind of got out of character there in the second half, had some turnovers. All year long we've been talking about transition baskets and we turn it over. They leaked out, got a couple transition buckets there and the momentum changed. Of course we were on the road, and I think that was the difference in the game. Typically, we definitely try to win the game on the defensive end and apply some pressure but we played a very good basketball team in the University of South Carolina. They were definitely making shots in the paint, high percentage shots. [We] wanted to use our strength, which is our guard play, quickness to the basket, try to involve the bigs in as many ball screens as we could and I thought we did a decent job the first half. We got into a situation where we were in the one-and-one in the bonus. We were getting to the basket and got them deep into the bench, got them in foul trouble. At the end of the day, you've got to play with a lot of passion, which I thought we did. We had poise there and some intellect for most of the game but I thought we got out of character there which, of course, against good basketball teams, every possession is different. This is new for us, and I feel sorry for the seniors because they won't get another shot at it, but just looking at our program and how far we've come, I'll say to you I think we'll be back.

On his team's energetic start to the game

All year long, we've been talking about energy and enthusiasm and effort and I want to commend Shanikwa Buie who is a freshman and also Tiyonda Davis, sophomore kid who had a couple injuries early on and I didn't want to just wait until this situation to communicate to them that they would definitely be forced to play some major minutes. I just want to commend those two, to play at a high level as long as they did against a very long and tall and sized team as South Carolina, one that has a lot of size and girth and not just in their starting lineup, but their key reserves. They were really bringing the quality depth out on the floor. I would just attribute it to the kids making adjustments. That was one of the reasons we wanted to just get shots at the bottom of the shot clock, just execute in the half court and bother them with ball screens. Of course, play with a little zeal and energy, but at the same time, give us an opportunity to rest on the offensive end because I knew defensively it was going to be a hard guard all day and we were definitely going to have to bring the energy and conditioning on the defensive end.

On South Carolina's points in the paint

That was a major concern. They're probably the most fundamentally sound post players we have seen all year. Typically, in our half court sets, we try to really dig in on the one dribble from the post players but [I] want to commend the post players of course [Aleighsa] Welch, of course [Alaina] Coates and also Asia Dozier. When they got inside, they kept it hot and we're pretty small, so we have to utilize our speed and quickness so they kept it hot and wouldn't allow us to dig in and get any steals and get out in transition. So I just want to commend them for doing a great job and finishing in the paint, but we kept giving the effort and Tiyonda [Davis] held up until about the last two or three minutes of the game, but I thought she gave a great effort in terms of trying to make a post presence.

Ezinne Kalu, Savannah State Guard

On her approach

We really tried to involve the post and the ball screen to get the post away from the basket because we know that they're so long so it's easy for them to block shots coming off the ball screen, so that's what the goal was.

Jasmine Norman, Savannah State Guard

On what led to South Carolina's run in the second half

We were just taking quick shots and weren't in position to rebound the ball. That left them able to run out and leak out and they just pushed the ball well as a whole and they just pushed the ball and we couldn't get back in time and that led to that 10-point deficit that we got down by.