

# NCAA Women's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Stockton

Saturday, March 25, 2017  
Stockton, California



## Dawn Staley Alisha Gray Kaela Davis South Carolina

SOUTH CAROLINA 100, Quinnipiac 58

THE MODERATOR: Please welcome South Carolina Gamecocks head coach Dawn Staley, and student athletes Kaela Davis and Alisha Gray.

DAWN STALEY: Well, it was great to get out, to get out there and play another game. It seemed like we were off for a long time. I thought our players came out ready to play on both sides of the ball and it was a really exciting game for us, and we were really up for the challenge of playing Quinnipiac, and I'm glad we get a chance to move on.

**Q. What were you guys doing early in the game defensively to shut them down? You started with a 16-0 run, and seemed like they couldn't do anything on offense.**

KAELA DAVIS: I think our biggest thing was obviously pressuring outside the three-point line. I've honestly never seen a team that could shoot the ball as well as them. So our biggest thing was just making them put the ball on the floor, you know, and if we had to give up a two, we'd much rather give up a two rather than a three.

ALLISHA GRAY: And like Coach said, just staying engaged. Like Kaela said, they are a great three-point shooting team. So we tried our best to run them off the three-point line, also.

**Q. For the players. Even though Quinnipiac had a great run so far in the tournament, a lot of people didn't really know much about them coming into the tournament, and obviously you guys didn't take them for granted. How did you -- what was your mindset of not taking a mid-major like that for granted and coming out so fast?**

ALLISHA GRAY: When we come out, we play every team the same. Doesn't matter what name is on the

jersey. We come out to play. Obviously they had a good run, but we still got a mission to complete and that's to make it to the Final Four National Championship.

KAELA DAVIS: I second that.

**Q. Kaela, you had a nice offensive game today. Was the basket really big for you out there?**

KAELA DAVIS: Yeah, I guess so. It doesn't matter, get my feet set, just making sure, kind of staying in rhythm. Like Coach said, it feels like we've been on for a long time with the gap between games. I think it's just like I said, just finding rhythm and staying in a rhythm.

**Q. How much of an emphasis was there just to be able to get off to a fast start, especially after the way the first two NCAA Tournament games kind of went?**

ALLISHA GRAY: The main thing for us is to come out strong the first five minutes and then take the game from there. We definitely want to stay aggressive and continue playing South Carolina basketball.

**Q. Kaela, the Elite 8 game, players through the years have said this is almost one of the hardest games because you're just one step away from the Final Four, which is where everybody wants to get. What are the priorities for an Elite 8 game mentally and also from an X's and O's perspective?**

KAELA DAVIS: Honestly I have no idea. It's my first time being here.

But no, I think it's, like I said, we're going to play basketball. We're going to play the way that we know how to play. No matter who is in front of us, we have to play hard. We have to come ready to play no matter who it is, as it was today.

But for us, we're going to sit here, watch both these teams. It's two really good teams. Two really experienced teams. Like I said, we are going to come out and play our game and play hard.

ALLISHA GRAY: I second that.

**Q. Is there something specifically challenging about the Elite 8 round, because you're so close to the Final Four at that point?**

DAWN STALEY: Yeah, I mean, I think for teams that have a goal of going to the Final Four and winning the National Championship, it is that step that, you know, can prevent you. Either you can overlook it -- not overlook it, but you can try to get ahead of yourself. I think for us, we just need to stay in character.

We need to approach it much like we approached every game of the season. Although the stakes are a little bit higher. Just keep it as normal as possible, and the teams that are able to stay the course and keep it normal are the ones that can open up a game.

**Q. You guys started off 9-0 run, they called a time-out and you go up 16-0 before they finally score. Almost a shutout. Being the type of player you were, how proud of the team were you for the way they played defense?**

DAWN STALEY: I was incredibly proud of our team to be able to lock in to the game plan, and execute it. I thought we did have a few lulls in the second quarter where we got careless with the basketball, and we also let some shooters loose. They had a really good second quarter.

So we have to continue to not have those lapses and put 40-minute games together at this stage of the game, because we'll play another great team on Monday night, and if you, you know, allow teams to play to their strengths, they can really make you pay for it.

**Q. Just defensively, what did you feel like was working and executing in that first quarter?**

DAWN STALEY: The biggest thing for us in this particular game is our speed. We wanted to speed them up. We didn't want them to be comfortable in their sets and allowing them to read what our defense is. And then staying in front of them. Just staying in between them and the basket and not allowing them to get ahead of the possession, because once they are ahead of the possession, it's hard to fight your way back, and they will get open threes when it's like that.

**Q. You had a lot of concerns about this team yesterday, but you were also very complimentary of them in getting this far. Where do you see the program going? Do you see them as a team that could be here regularly?**

DAWN STALEY: I do. Because the style of play at this time of the year, if you're not used to playing this. And we're not -- we weren't. We had four days to prepare for this style of play, and usually you get, you know, if you advance, if they advance past the first round, you have one chemistry and they believe in each other. This type of thing can happen on a regular basis.

**Q. You've had a handful of games now without Alaina in the starting lineup. What are you liking about the team and your starters, in particular, at this point, and what can they do that maybe they didn't quite have with Alaina there?**

DAWN STALEY: With Alaina out, I think it just leaves a big void. Like driving lanes were there for us. It gives A'Ja Wilson an opportunity to work the paint a little bit more and maybe feel like it's not so clogged up. And I thought tonight, or today, they played, almost double teamed her.

But for the guards, like a Kaela Davis, she's getting to the basket a little bit more. Allisha Gray can play more downhill. Bianca Cuevas thrives off of the space that's left with the void of not having Alaina Coates in there. But we do, we feel from a rebounding and defensive standpoint, we feel her presence missed.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Coach Staley. We'll see you Monday.