

March 6, 2015



South Carolina – 58
Arkansas – 36

An interview with:

**COACH JIMMY DYKES
JESSICA JACKSON
CALLI BERNA**

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Arkansas head coach and student-athletes Jessica Jackson and Calli Berna.

COACH DYKES: First off, we didn't come here to play the game today. We weren't just happy being in the quarterfinals. We came here to win.

I thought our effort and our fight and everything we did as a team poured ourself into that process from the time we met last night at dinner till the time of the opening tip. Couldn't ask any more of our team.

We had a difficult time scoring obviously. Shot 19% in the game, only scored 36 points. I still feel like we play like an NCAA tournament team.

It's only the third time all year that South Carolina has been held to below 60 points, and we held them to 58. The other times it's happened has been against ranked opponents. Defensively we're about as good as anybody in the country. Nothing has changed since yesterday. We won 17 games against a strength of schedule was eight. It will probably drop now after playing South Carolina. We did everything the Selection Committee tells you over the years you're supposed to do. We scheduled very aggressively in the non-conference. We had six wins in non-conference play away from Bud Walton Arena on the road or neutral floors. That ties for second in the nation from the power five conferences. Our résumé is really, really strong.

They tell us all the time they don't even consider where you finish in your conference standings. We played in the eight-nine game. We

have six wins, now seven wins in the SEC. Our wins against Oklahoma, Iowa, at Middle Tennessee, on down the board, looks to me like an NCAA tournament résumé. I hope the Selection Committee rewards us.

I say that because I know our players deserve to be in the tournament. They have poured themselves into a process over the last six months with only nine of them. You can't ask any more as a coaching staff than what we've asked out of them, how tight they've been, how tough they've been, together they've been. They never look for an excuse. The most resilient group of student-athletes I've ever been around.

They were dialed in at 8:30 this morning trying to take down South Carolina. I know in my heart they deserve to be in the tournament. I hope that holds true for us.

South Carolina obviously is as good as anybody in the country. I told Dawn afterwards, I hope you win the whole thing. I think they have as good a chance as anybody in the country to do it. They have size, kids that knock down shots when they need them, they defend their tails off.

They were better than us today. When we had 38-31, the building was alive. I know that. So I felt good about our effort.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. (No microphone.)

JESSICA JACKSON: I think defensively they did what they were supposed to do, just played good defense.

Q. Calli, I know they had 11 blocks against you. What was it like playing against that size inside?

CALLI BERNA: It's not a question when you look out on the court, you see they had a definite size advantage. We knew that going into it.

Our goal was to try to get in the paint, get some kick-outs. Once you get in there, you don't see them coming.

They have a very good inside game. I know they do that to just about everybody they played. One thing I can say for my team, we didn't back down, we kept driving it.

Unfortunately it didn't fall for us so much today, but we didn't back down.

Q. Coach, you mentioned that sequence where you got it within seven, the crowd was getting loud. What did you think you needed to do to get over that hump? Just a matter of making shots?

COACH DYKES: Yeah, I mean, when you shoot 19%, that was a big part of it.

We tried to shorten the length of the game today. The more possessions in this game, it's going to favor the size and the depth and the talent and the All-Americans that South Carolina has on the floor.

We were trying to shorten the length of the game today by running motion, running our 'pig' action we call it. We didn't want to shoot quick, early in the shot clock. It's difficult. It's very hard. They had 15 blocks. I mean, 15 blocks in the game, that's hard to overcome. We only got to the free-throw line 15 times.

We had to play today to beat South Carolina, we were going to have to play our best game. At moments we had really good stretches, but we just weren't quite powerful enough, strong enough to finish it off.

Q. What are these next few days going to be like?

COACH DYKES: If I'm not mistaken, it's going to be a week from Monday. It's going to be long. I'm going to go recruiting as soon as I can get out of here, keep building this program. That's what I came here to do. That's what we're going to do. I can tell you that much.

So for our players, we're going to take three or four days off, then we're going to work out next week. We expect to be in post-season play. I know we will be. I'm sure hoping it's the NCAA tournament.

It will be an anxious Selection Monday for us. We're right on the edge. One of the last four teams in as of yesterday. It's amazing to me how accurate they are in those early projections.

Q. Jessica, like coach said, you're playing for a spot in the NCAA tournament. How do you feel the way you competed in

these two games in the tournament and how confident do you feel about your chances?

JESSICA JACKSON: I think we've competed pretty good as a team this whole season. I think we deserve to be in the NCAA tournament, as well, so...

Q. Coach talked about your defense. What did you think was the biggest key defensively?

CALLI BERNA: We know that defense is what's going to win you games. When you're not hitting, when we're shooting 19%, you know you have to close in on them. Our goal was to pack it in, make them hit outside shots. We did our best. They're obviously some tall girls. That was our goal, to make them kick the ball out.

Q. Coach, obviously you feel like you should be in. Sitting here right now, do you think you are?

COACH DYKES: I think if it was Selection Friday, we'd be one of the last three teams in. I think we deserve that. We won 17 games against a strength of schedule that's number eight as of this morning. We just played arguably one of the top two teams in the country. We had 31-38 in the second half. We held that team for the only the third time or fourth time all year below 60 points.

We're built to win games on a neutral floor. If that Selection Committee is watching, what kind of team could have success in this tournament? They look at Arkansas, they say they're the kind of team that can have it. We have the same schedule next year, because you have to do that to get ready for this league.

Those wins are quality wins. Oklahoma is in second place in the Big 12. Iowa was in second place the last time I check in the Big Ten. Middle Tennessee was leading their league or one game behind in their league. Tulsa, good wins. We won on the road in the SEC, LSU, beat Georgia when they were ranked, took down Ole Miss yesterday.

If we're not in, I know this, there will be teams that get in I think that don't have the résumé that we do. I trust them. I've been through the selection process before, when I was at ESPN, the mock selection process. They're very dialed in, very dialed in. I know they want the best teams there in terms of the at-large teams.

I trust them. Our athletic director Jeff Long was in charge of the College Football Playoff

Selection Committee. Those people, they take it very serious. They know what's at stake. They want to reward the teams and student-athletes that belong to be there. It does matter to me because it matters to them. I want them to be in there.

But if they put in the teams that deserve to be in there based upon the criteria they have always said over the years, what I went through in the mock Selection Committee, we deserve to be in the tournament.

Q. How many teams do you think will get in from the SEC if Arkansas is one of those teams?

COACH DYKES: I know what tradition has said. For the most part, there's between six and eight teams every year out of this league that get in. The Selection Committee doesn't look at that at all. They don't factor in there's eight teams from this league, take another one from that league.

Your résumé stands on its own from everybody else. I'll say it again. Our résumé is stronger than some teams in this league that are still under consideration. Dawn Staley told me the same thing, You deserve to be in, I hope it falls your way on selection night.

I can't give you a number. All I can think about is our team. I'm pretty sure South Carolina, Tennessee, A&M, Kentucky, pretty sure about those guys. A couple of them have a chance to win the whole thing. I hope they do if we don't.

I was very, very proud again, pleased with our crowd today. In central Arkansas, for a noon start, had our tip time been at 6:00 at night, no telling how many Hog fans would have been here. Razorback fans are the best fan base in the country. We've got a lot of great things going for us. Mike Anderson's team is getting to go on a roll in the NCAA tournament. That's a very good men's team.

One of the great things that happened to us last night, Bret Bielema called us, called the Hogs. We're a close-knit family, and I'm honored to be a part of that family.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, ladies, thank you for joining us.

COACH DYKES: Thank you.

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