

**March 7, 2015**



South Carolina – 74  
LSU – 54

An interview with:

**COACH NIKKI CALDWELL  
RAIGYNE MONCRIEF  
DaSHAWN HARDEN**

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by LSU head coach along with student-athletes Raigyne Moncrief and DaShawn Harden.

COACH CALDWELL: I thought our team played extremely hard. We fought till the end. Our game plan in the first half was very efficient and disruptive. In the second half we got away from being that aggressive team with our defensive play, and South Carolina being one of the best teams in the country took advantage of that.

A lot of credit to South Carolina and their team. It was a well-fought game for about 30 minutes there. This team, my young team, they've got to learn and grow from this and understand that you have to play with that same intensity for 40 minutes.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. DaShawn, you got loose for 17 points in the first half, only one in the second. What did they do to take away your looks?**

DaSHAWN HARDEN: They just went to like a really tight defense, their best defenders. They were just really close on me, I guess.

**Q. DaShawn, how fun was that first half, given the two earlier blowout losses? Did you think you could continue it?**

DaSHAWN HARDEN: It was fun. I mean, it wasn't enough. I mean, it's nice not to get punched first. But it wasn't enough.

**Q. Coach, you spoke yesterday about wanting to get off to a good start. Obviously**

**you had that tonight. Speak to your mindset both before the game and through the different stages tonight.**

COACH CALDWELL: Well, before the game, you know, we wanted to be one of the best running teams on the floor. In the first half, I thought our transition game was really good, as far as pushing tempo. Talked about pushing the ball halfcourt in three seconds, we were doing that.

Defensively to defend a very athletic and tall South Carolina team, being undersized, I thought we battled inside. I thought we really tried to get to the places first and establish our presence on the low block and on the help side. We did that for the first half.

The second half, as the game was moving along, I challenged the team to really not be afraid to be successful, to really not leave anything out there, and don't make excuses for the outcome of the game.

We fell short of our goal.

**Q. Coach, considering what happened in the first two meetings, I imagine limiting them inside was a focus. How hard is that to do against them for 40 minutes?**

COACH CALDWELL: It's difficult. It's a major focus that you have to have when you are an undersized team. We can't miss our defensive rotations. We can't miss our assignments because they will make you pay.

They have Coates who established them in the second half as a go-to. You keep the ball high. She does a nice job of doing that. She's the one that really to me in the second half made a big difference.

Tina Roy coming into that position as there go-to player on the perimeter, she made some threes that opened up that perimeter game for them.

We wanted to really try to take away the paint. We actually in the second half gave them both paint and perimeter.

**Q. Do you feel like the last couple games and the improvement you showed in the first half today is enough to maybe help you get over the hump and get in the NCAA tournament? Do you feel you needed that additional help?**

COACH CALDWELL: Well, every game is helping your résumé, especially in the SEC. This conference is extremely competitive. It's not easy to get 10 wins in a regular season, in our conference play.

I know playing a team like South Carolina who potentially has the rights to be a number one seed, it exposed our weaknesses. But we also saw all the things that we did very well, and we should carry that with us going into the NCAA tournament.

**Q. You took Tiffany Mitchell out of the game right from the start. How hard is it to try to scout South Carolina and everything they have on the bench?**

COACH CALDWELL: You've got to make sure that your intensity and your level of effort is there for 40 minutes because they can bring waves and waves of people in, and you can't take a possession off against a team like South Carolina. They're going to keep fresh legs. They're going to have the size inside.

They brought in their shooters. They have a very balanced attack. We didn't stretch our bench as much as I would like to. But I felt as though the players that did play, they exhausted everything that they had.

**Q. Can you speak to South Carolina as a program, their rise to prominence.**

COACH CALDWELL: Well, Dawn Staley is one of the most competitive people I've ever played against. We played against each other back in the early '90s. Just her contribution to women's basketball at every level, she's a superstar. She's a superstar on the court, as a player, representing our country. She does a phenomenal job with her team. She has all the right tools to make a strong run at a championship this year.

I know that her competitive drive, her team takes on that personality. You can see it.

**Q. After DaShawn kind of went off in the first half, she was limited to 12 minutes in the second half. What was going on there?**

COACH CALDWELL: Well, we wanted to make sure that we established our running game. You're not going to run the basketball as much when you're not getting the defensive stops.

In the first half, that's what we were doing. We were able to alter their percentage. They were shooting in the 30s. But it's going to be hard to run when you're allowing a team to shoot almost 80% in a half.

We're a running team. I thought in the first half we did a nice job of pushing tempo and finding DaShawn early in our offense. She's one of those players that can make plays.

In the second half, we had some looks. We had some opportunities to make some extra passes. We didn't.

We tried to be aggressive to the basket. I thought Ballard and Moncrief did exactly what I asked them to do. Obviously in recent games we've been able to get those calls and go to the free-throw line more than what we did in the second half.

**Q. Raigyne, will the disappointment linger for a while and then will you think ahead to the selection show Monday? Are you concerned about that at all? Do you feel you'll see your name show up next Monday night?**

RAIGYNE MONCRIEF: Yeah, I would think so. But once again, we just waiting. We preparing for whatever we have for two weeks. We just going to practice hard, just wait for the results, see what's going to happen.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, ladies, thank you very much.

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