

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Florida.

Coach, your thoughts on today's game against Kentucky.

COACH BUTLER: Obviously we're terribly disappointed by the way we played. Played a great first quarter, then that was pretty much it.

I think the thing that's the most disappointing is the way we played defensively. That's something we worked really hard on coming in the past two weeks, really tried to embrace as part of our identity, which is the catalyst for making us a good offensive team. We had big letdowns in that area.

But you have to give Kentucky a lot of credit. They took it personal, I think, not being in the top-four seeds, and really played like a great post-season team. All the momentum they generated in February, they took it right into the tournament. Congratulations to them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You mentioned you had a good first quarter but not much else. What happened in the second quarter? What changed?**

COACH BUTLER: Well, I think that we played a little too much individual basketball in that quarter. I think offensively we didn't make great decisions with the ball. We gave them the ball back too quickly. We weren't very good in transition. Just didn't play a very disciplined game in terms of the things that we do.

I don't think we're a team you would categorize as super disciplined. But we're disciplined in the things that we prioritize and we make important. We didn't do a very good job of that in that quarter.

Like I said, I didn't think we played very together. To beat a really good team like Kentucky, that's what you have to do.

**Q. Coach, Kentucky seems to be a real streaky offensive team. Makayla and Janee feed off each other. When they hit shots, it's off to the races for them. Is it difficult to stop their momentum once they get going?**

COACH BUTLER: They're a very good team. Great guard duo. Epps is clearly one of the best players in this league. I think they all draw confidence from her. Janee is a very good player as well.

You have to guard them, take them out of their comfort zones. We didn't do a very good job of that.

**Q. Carlie, when you hit those two threes early coming back from the concussion and everything, can you talk about that? Did you think that was going to get you going there?**

CARLIE NEEDLES: Yeah, I mean, like coach said, we came out and threw the first punch. We outscored them 16-9 in the first quarter. Hitting shots obviously gives you confidence going into the rest of the

game. We needed to capitalize on that.

I feel like once they got back up and went on their run, we didn't really answer to them. That won't happen again. We learned from that. We've learned from this in the past. We'll keep hitting shots, get ourselves in the gym and make sure that doesn't happen again.

**Q. Coach, you beat Kentucky earlier in the season. Did they give you a couple different looks this game?**

COACH BUTLER: Not really. They haven't changed a lot in terms of different plays or different schemes. I think that they're just doing what they do at a much higher level.

I think, if anything, they probably narrowed and consolidated what they're doing as opposed to broadening what they're doing.

We didn't do a very good job of getting the quality paint touches that we did in this game that we did in the first game. Again, you have to give their defense credit for that.

**Q. Moving forward, talk about how critical it is for your program to maybe try to get to the second week of the NCAA tournament, to establish the turnaround you've established for at least the beginning part of this season.**

COACH BUTLER: Clearly we just want to continue to make strides forward. That's fully what I expect this team to do.

We play our tournament really early. That gives us a big gap of time between this tournament and then knowing who your next opponent it's going to be.

I know our team and our leaders will make sure we capitalize on that opportunity to improve. We'll go one game at a time just like we have every other game we played this year. But that will start with one day at a time with opportunities to improve.

**Q. How tough is it to get to the next level in a conference where there's so many elite-level teams?**

COACH BUTLER: Conference has just been nuts this year. We always feel like we're at the top in terms, from top to bottom, the quality of teams and coaches and players in this league. This year I think is unprecedented. I think we have 10 NCAA tournament teams. We have several top-four seeds as well. It's been an amazing year.

That's why great competitors like these two right here choose to play at universities in this league, to find out how good you are, and to compete at the highest level.

**Q. Ronni, talk about the second quarter, how it went so badly, how you felt at halftime.**

RONNI WILLIAMS: We just got away from playing our game. We couldn't snap out of that.

**Q. Coach, do you think this team is a little bit better suited for the NCAA tournament in the sense that team also have shorter time to prepare, won't have seen a team similar to you?**

COACH BUTLER: I hope so. That sounds good. But you know you're going to be playing against a top team. Most likely not going to be on your home court. You've got to do everything you can to maximize who you are and make that the most important thing going forward.

Definitely our style and the way the league prepares you for the next level of competition, there's not another league out there that has experienced what we've experienced in the SEC this year. I think we have a lot of teams that are deserving of high seeds. I think we're going to have a lot of teams that are battle-tested and ready for the next level of competition because of the way we all have challenged one another.

**Q. Florida has the host of the tournament this year. Was there anything that encouraged fans from local areas to come out and support Florida? How is it different from the past?**

COACH BUTLER: We didn't host it as a university. The state, absolutely. I think Jacksonville has done a fabulous job of showcasing the city and the opportunities to have the tournament here.

It's a great location. The weather. The most important thing is this is an amazing product. You have great competition, great women's basketball in an area that people are hopefully going to want to come to.

Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Sports Council have done a great job of making this a great event, Gator fans, Tiger fans, fans everywhere, they've done a great job. I know the rest of the tournament is going to be fantastic as well.

**Q. Your team goes as deep as any team in the conference. Nine players on the roster. Do you ever sit back and wonder if they ever get tired?**

COACH BUTLER: No.

**Q. Kentucky?**

COACH BUTLER: Kentucky?

**Q. Yes. Are they at a point that they've played with a depleted roster?**

COACH BUTLER: These guys are elite athletes. If they only had five players, or if we only had five players, they're elite athletes that train their body all year long to play in a 40-minute game as hard as they possibly can.

Kentucky only having nine players, however many players LSU has had, this year we went deeper, other years we had less players. That's why these kids work so hard in the off-season, so no matter what circumstances may be thrown at them in the season, be it a limited roster, injuries, whatever happens. These are the best competitors in the country. I think that trumps any roster size or any of those things. I think it matters more to compete and win for their universities.