

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by South Carolina.

Coach, could you tell us what it means to cap this perfect season in SEC play with a run to the SEC tournament championship.

COACH STALEY: It means a great deal. It means that we put our names in the history book in this traditionally rich conference. It means that our players have put in the work to be amongst one of the top teams in this conference. Hopefully we can continue.

It also means they're upholding what the players that have come before them did. Both when we were 10-18 to us winning the regular season and the tournament championship last year.

They represent all of those players from our program in the highest form.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Khadijah, the last two games especially it seemed like you were locked in defensively. Did you think you deserved a spot on the all-tournament team? Do y'all think she really set the tone for these last three games?

KHADIJAH SESSIONS: I just do what coach asks me to do. My energy on both ends of the ball is very important. I have to lead this team. I knew it was very important. I was going to be key for both of these games.

That's pretty much it.

No, I don't think I deserved to be on the team. They put who they want there. I'm just going to do whatever it takes to get my team a win.

COACH STALEY: I do. I think a lot of times the things that Khadijah does for our team are a lot of times intangibles. She had some big, huge buckets for us, intangibles you could pull out of the stat sheet for this game and the last game.

I think sometimes, you know, because our team has so many great players, the ones that really make an incredible impact aren't the ones that are highlighted, which is okay.

You want that selflessness, that sacrifice. That's what all good teams have, the players who don't get the highlighted credit.

Q. Coach, has Tiffany usually drawn guarding Victoria? What were your thoughts on what you wanted to do defensively against her? Even though she started quick, did you stay with the plan with regards to her?

COACH STALEY: Tiffany draws the top perimeter player, scorer. Khadijah usually gets the point guard to

start our pressure.

What we want to do is make her work for everything. Sometimes she makes that look very, very easy. But what we wanted to do is kind of, over the course of 40 minutes, continue to make her work, continue to have her running off screens, continue to have her playing on both sides of the ball.

Then, you know, maybe when the fourth quarter hits, her legs won't be as fresh as they were in the first 30 minutes of the game. I thought we did a really good job with that.

Tiffany started off on her. Then Khadijah finished her off in the fourth quarter.

Q. Coach Staley, could you talk about how much your players seemed to really enjoy the moment out there. I know you have bigger goals in mind than just this tournament. They seemed to enjoy this moment. And could you talk about the difficulty of the challenge of trying to get to the big trophy with people like UConn, Baylor and Notre Dame in the way.

COACH STALEY: Our players haven't played their best basketball over the past few weeks. So I think it was a combination of us finally, you know, feeling like we felt maybe in the beginning of the season or the middle of the season on both sides of the ball.

I think when they're able to execute that, they enjoy that moment. I don't think it's an unsportsmanlike thing. It's a thing where they're enjoying playing out there, executing the game plan, and winning.

To your second question, in order for you to get back to winning the big trophy, the national championship trophy, you have to be in familiar territory. We've afforded ourselves of that opportunity last year when we won a regional final, when we went to the Final Four, and we played in a game.

We also afforded an opportunity to play UConn during the regular season. So the more opportunity you put yourself into playing some of the top teams in the country, the more familiar they are to you, and you can have some success.

Q. A'ja and Khadijah, you have been businesslike, not wanting to celebrate too much. Did it feel good to celebrate today? Were you holding back the regular season and saving it for this?

A'JA WILSON: I mean, I wouldn't necessarily say we were holding back. I think we're being professional.

I felt like we really deserved this win. I think that makes it 10 times better. That's the reason for us to celebrate.

Throughout the season, wins are great. When you get a huge win like this, especially it being back-to-back, especially for our seniors as well, I feel like you don't have a choice but to enjoy the moment and live in the moment.

KHADIJAH SESSIONS: What A just said (laughter).

Q. Dawn, do you think this is the final stamp on getting the No. 1 seed in the Lexington regional?

COACH STALEY: I think we did our part. I think we did more than our part considering how the committee chose how we went to Greensboro last year. We don't have a defeat on our schedule in the last 10 games. We're playing a lot better, just better looking out there.

They've named the top-10 teams in the country over the past few weeks. They had us in the No. 2 slot overall. Hopefully that means we'll get to play closer to home.

Q. How do you keep going through this long stretch between the tournament selection and then tournament play?

COACH STALEY: What we've done in the past, we'll take some time off. It's our spring break this week. We'll give the players a day or two off (laughter). We'll give them a few days off, then we'll get back to doing things at the end of the week.

I think we got to play a lot more. We got to scrimmage a lot more. Sometimes we just drill, drill, drill, drill, drill. We kind of lose what it feels like to play in games.

Q. Dawn, do you stick by your earlier contention that when it comes to competing with these top teams and winning these games, it's just a matter of you guys fighting a little bit more off? Defensively it seems like you're right there.

COACH STALEY: It's our offense that when we're in those situations that has failed us.

Offense is confidence. When you see the ball go in the hole, that rim gets bigger. It's much like defense: when you get stops, it fuels you.

For us, we know we have great players. We just got to continue to not have those huge droughts when we play great teams. They make you pay time and time again.

We do have the experience of our SEC tournament and the way we play from an offensive standpoint to draw on to help us get through this upcoming post-season.

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