

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 1, 2018

Holly Warlick Mercedes Russell Rennia Davis Tennessee Lady Volunteers

Tennessee - 64, Auburn - 61

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Tennessee head coach, Holly Warlick, and student-athletes Rennia Davis and Mercedes Russell. Coach, first your opening thoughts on tonight's win over Auburn.

HOLLY WARLICK: It was just a battle for us. Gosh, we did some not good things, but then we also did some good things. Our team was really resilient. We were resilient. We would turn it over and then we would make them turn it over. I thought our fourth quarter defense was solid. These two just played their hearts out, and, um, just really proud of 'em.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes?

Q. Rennia, could you go over that last shot, how you felt when you letting it go, that kind of thing?

RENNIA DAVIS: Well, my coaches just always told me to stay confident. I didn't call a bank shot technically but just staying confident in my shot helped my follow through and it just went in.

Q. For either, when Jaime got hurt and had to go out and came back in and had to go back out what was the team's emotional standpoint and getting this win for her?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It was tough. Anytime you lose a starter it's tough especially when Jaime is scoring for us and I think everybody else stepped up and played huge at the end of the game.

Q. Mercedes, how much did y'all work on your free throws between last season and this season?

MERCEDES RUSSELL: A lot. We work on it in practice every day for a long time. It's kind of something we have been wanting to get better at. When we shoot a lot of free throws at the end of the game it's usually in our favor and tonight we shot really



well, over 80% of the team which is huge.

HOLLY WARLICK: I will say this, Mercedes, she shoots a great percentage inside and last year I thought that people would just start fouling her because her free throw shooting wasn't very well. This summer and every day she works on her free throw shooting. She did this today because she put in a lot of time on her own, on her own! Really proud of her, because this is something that she needed to make -- put in her game to make it better and she did just that.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, we will dismiss you. Thank you.

HOLLY WARLICK: Y'all got off easy!

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach?

Q. Holly, you mentioned after the South Carolina game how good Auburn is at pressing and how much they like to?

HOLLY WARLICK: Yeah.

Q. You wound up having a 24-5 advantage in free throws taken. How big was it to have that kind of a gap in this game?

HOLLY WARLICK: We should have attacked more. I thought the first quarter really in the middle of the second quarter I thought we just passed and stood.

Our goal was to attack, attack the gaps, attack the defense, and get to the free throw line. So when we started doing that and moving them around, we did really well. That's our game. When we get to the free throw line and are aggressive, we usually win the basketball game. I will say that Meme Jackson is one of our best free throw shooters. I thought when she went up I thought she is making both of these! So it was something we needed in Mercedes, 10 for 10, that's awesome. She got two shots but then she got fouled and finished the deal on the line.

Q. Coach, as you look ahead to tomorrow, how difficult is it to turn around to get ready for a team like South Carolina? And also how frustrating is it to once again prepare when you don't know A'ja Wilson's status?

HOLLY WARLICK: We're going to prepare that A'ja is

going to be there, but we did this -- we went to Cancun this year to prepare to play three games in a row, so hopefully we're prepared for that.

It's a one game at a time deal and just like we treated Auburn, it was one game at a time. To play South Carolina now on Friday, it's tough when we have already played. But we've done it. We will prepare for it. It's really nice that we just got through playing them our last home game so they're really fresh on our minds. Yeah, we're going to prepare like A'ja is there, like we have every time that we have played 'em.

Q. After Jaime was injured she came back in the game and scored what proved to be an important basket. Was she -- did she feel pain and had to come back out? Could you explain why she went in and had to go back out?

HOLLY WARLICK: She thought she could go back in so we put her back in and she scored and she looked over at me and said, "I gotta come out." So apparently it was hurting worse than she had thought. She is a tough kid. For her to pull herself, she was in some pain.

I'm glad she came in and hit a bucket, but Jaime had a great game going, was aggressive, bringing the ball up, had three steals. I mean, she just -- she had a quality game and for her to go down -- she hit pretty hard. The officials were concerned that she got tripped and she didn't get tripped. They asked me, and I said, "She did not get tripped." I said, "She fell pretty hard on her hip."

Q. Holly, your team forced four shot clock violations today.

HOLLY WARLICK: Yeah.

Q. What were you doing on the defensive end to get them that late in the shot clock and keep them from making shots?

HOLLY WARLICK: We mixed it up and we switched on everything, whether it was Mercedes guarding a point guard or Annie got stuck on the post one time and I thought she did a great job of making the kid shoot over her. So we tried -- we played a 2-3, I should have probably gone the second quarter to our 2-3 zone but we wanted to save it until the second half. But we just identified the shooters, and we were key on that. If they ran the baseline we went with them. Our defense was solid, but down the stretch we didn't take advantage of us getting them late in the shot clock and turning them over, because then we would turn around and turn it over as well. I drew up everything I knew to get the ball up the floor.

Q. Holly, you have two All-SEC seniors in Nared

and Russell, but Rennia Davis seems like she can handle the big stage, too. Could you talk about her confidence?

HOLLY WARLICK: Well, Rennia, when we played Vanderbilt here she didn't have a very good game. She went back -- we spent a lot of time talking and she just went back to work. This kid is a gym rat. She gets in the gym. She watches a lot of film, especially with Dean, watches a lot of tape and she is a sponge. A lot of kids just ask questions to be doing that. Rennia asks because she wants to know and learn. I just keep telling her, anything you do. She was settling for the jumper and now she is taking it hard to the basket. I have a lot of confidence in Rennia Davis. I don't care if she is a freshman. She plays the game hard. She plays the game aggressive. She thinks the game. She is learning the game. So she is -- again, she is a credit of a kid getting in the gym and working to get better.

So I'm going to put the ball in her hands, and hey, she played forty minutes and I didn't think she looked tired at all. Anyway, she is going to be -- she is very, very good, she is going to be a great player for us.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.