

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 3, 2018

Joni Taylor Mackenzie Engram Taja Cole Georgia Bulldogs

Georgia - 55, Missouri - 41

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

JONI TAYLOR: I thought it was a tough game by both teams. Missouri is a great team. I have no doubt they're going to make a far run in the NCAA tournament and I think you just saw two teams tonight that didn't want to lose. So it was a physical battle, it was a tough battle and we're just fortunate to come out with the win.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Mackenzie, having two fouls in the first half I saw you still bringing that energy on the bench, screaming and that. How did that kind of lead into getting back on the court and having the success you did in the second half?

MACKENZIE ENGRAM: Well I think I have a bad habit of getting down on myself and when I do that I tend to stay down on myself. And so I knew for this tournament I didn't want that to be the case, so when I got the two fouls I came off. I had one of my teammates tell me our code word and I was out of it. And I just wanted to be there for my team and be positive and keep them lifted, because I knew they were going to have to carry us while I was out.

Q. You stopped them in the half court. How were you able to lock in the second they got past half court and really stifle a team like Missouri?

TAJA COLE: I think in the first quarter I caught two early fouls. So when we got to the third quarter I knew I could bring more pressure, so I started to pressure the ball full court and we started to deny and really try and get after it so we could close out the game.

MACKENZIE ENGRAM: So they have two great post



players in Porter and Frericks. And I knew that was going to be a tough job for both Caliya and I. And I knew that in order for us to be successful we have to stop them on the inside. So just trying to be as physical as possible, they're two physical post players and also not continuing to draw fouls.

Then Joni, Coach Joni, always tells us defense travels so we knew that's what we needed to hang our hat on, to pull out the win.

Q. Mackenzie, you had 11 and 11 last time against South Carolina. What does it take to be successful against that front line and how excited are you to get a second chance at them?

MACKENZIE ENGRAM: I'm really excited. South Carolina is a great team, they have a lot of good players. And I think just where we failed last time was boxing out. They got a lot of second-chance shots and we fouled them a lot. So just trying to box them out, get the rebound, push in transition, and just kind of do what we do best. It's going to be a great game and hopefully we come out on top.

Q. Taja, the other day you spoke about how everything runs through a team's point guard. How important it is to play well against that point guard. How do you think you did against her? How do you feel like that kind of disrupted Missouri offensively as a whole?

TAJA COLE: Missouri's point guard, she's a really good point guard. I think she controls the pace of their game. I just tried to pressure her and just play defense like I do every night against them.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll take questions for coach, please.

Q. With Que Morrison in the second half, what was your message? Did you have a message to her at halftime and how did that kind of help you guys in the end there, 16 second half points?

JONI TAYLOR: First of all thank you for coming, great to see you here. I did not have a message for Que. She played well against Missouri the first time we played them. And tonight it was cue, sometimes it's Gabby, sometimes it is Maya Caldwell. Because there's so much attention given to Mackenzie and Caliya, it gives our guards opportunities to score and

she just found her opportunities tonight. She didn't rush anything and she made good shots and then she was able to set up to the free-throw line in some crucial situations and make free throws for us. So I'm really proud of her. This is a kid who started every single game for us this year except for one and that experience helped her tonight.

Q. Looking ahead to tomorrow. Tonight South Carolina's three bigs put up a combined 58 points between Wilson, Jennings and Herbert Harrigan, so when all three are putting up numbers like that, how difficult are they to play and how do you stop that?

JONI TAYLOR: Yeah, so obviously we'll go back and we'll watch film on South Carolina. Not let them catch the ball. That's what makes them so tough is that obviously they have got three players inside who can score and then they have got perimeter players too. So we have got to, again, be really sound defensively, make them catch it in an uncomfortable situations, and not let them score in areas where they want the basketball. It's going to be tough.

Q. Last time y'all played Missouri in the regular season you stopped them on defense the same sort of way but Sophie got her points. What did your defense do to really kind of keep her from ever getting in a rhythm tonight?

JONI TAYLOR: She's a great player. I'm not sure she missed some shots she normally makes. We just tried as much as possible to keep her covered up where she couldn't catch the basketball, whether that was through ball pressure or her not being able to see anything. When you got a player like Sophie who can score at all three levels, shooting it, driving it and posting up, it make it's difficult for us and she puts a lots of pressure on defenses. So our challenge was not let her ever be open and if she can't catch it, she can't score it, so.

Q. Caliya Robinson had six blocks and collected her thousandth point of her career. Just what can you say about her night on the defensive end and then what you saw physically?

JONI TAYLOR: Well to get a thousand points as a junior is a huge milestone. And Caliya is always committed to playing great defense for us whether she's blocking shots or not, she just has the ability to alter shots from the defensive end is something that other teams are always worried about. And so the growth and maturity that she showed is even though she wasn't having her best offensive night, she did so many things for us by rebounding, blocking shots, running the floor, putting pressure on the other team, so I'm just happy for her and proud of the way she played tonight.

Q. Wondering when have you the fourth quarter final and it's late, what's the routine like for the next 18 hours since you have to come back pretty quickly?

JONI TAYLOR: We'll obviously stay here until we can go home and then eat and get a good night's sleep. And then we will wake up tomorrow and prep for South Carolina. We'll have breakfast and then we'll have a shoot around and get ready to play again. Get them off their feet and get ready to play. But this is tournament time, it is what it is. So we're not really focusing on what time it is now or what time it is when we wake up and play. It's just survive and advance so that's what we want to do.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.