

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 3, 2018

Joni Taylor Mackenzie Engram Taja Cole Georgia Bulldogs

South Carolina - 71, Georgia - 49

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

JONI TAYLOR: Obviously it's disappointing not to get the win. I think for us we have got to get back to doing what we do. We didn't score the ball very well. When that happens your defense has got to stand up. And we had too many lapses down on the defensive end of the floor. And credit South Carolina, they have got a great team. And every time we chose to double, that person stepped up and made big shots and that's what we have got to do and hopefully that's what we learned from this game. We've got to be able to knock down big shots in games like this.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Mackenzie, to follow up on what I asked you earlier: As a senior, I guess what is your message to your teammates going through this period of layoff with an opportunity, well, I mean I suppose there's an opportunity to kind of hamper on this loss, also an opportunity to look to what's ahead. So what's the one thing that you want your teammates to know as a senior leader?

MACKENZIE ENGRAM: Just to keep moving forward. Take the loss and leave that behind, but carry the lesson on. And with these two weeks we have to stay on top of our game, stay in shape, stay in the gym, and just get ready for NCAA.

Q. Taja, as a point guard, eight assists and no turnovers, only seven turnovers as a team. How frustrating was it to not be able to have more success offensively when you limited your turnovers like that?

TAJA COLE: It's definitely frustrating. I think we had a terrible shooting night, we went 19-64 from the field,



but I think it's okay, we have the NCAA tournament coming up -- of course the loss isn't okay -- but I'm just looking forward to getting back to Athens, getting in the gym and just getting with my teammates because I know we can make a long run in the NCAA tournament and that's what we want to do.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. We'll take questions for coach.

Q. On the offensive end you talk about lapses in defense but do you think that led to the missed opportunities offensively, maybe a layup or consecutive misses in transition?

JONI TAYLOR: Well, yeah, I think that -- obviously I thought we started out really well defensively and then as we did not score, we let that affect what we did on the defensive end of the floor. South Carolina shot it well today, but there were, mentally, assignments we missed and the bottom line is we got to score the basketball. We had opportunities and didn't make it, we had shots we didn't take, shots we didn't shoot. That's what hurt us today is we have got to shoot the basketball better, we got to be able to score the ball.

Q. What do you do when you're playing off your defense and you don't get those shots to go down? Is it just simply get back in the gym or try to get maybe some kids to shoot a little bit more?

JONI TAYLOR: Yeah, I think it's a lot of film. It's so frustrating, especially when you're a competitor, but when you look at it, this is new for this team, we have a very young team and there's different pieces that we're putting out there on the floor and there's times that we're not all on the same page. And you would like to think that in March that wouldn't happen but with the amount of freshmen that we play, it happens at times. So we got to be better about making sure we're in the right spots, we're executing, and then that leads to being better offensively. But of course you can always get in the gym and shoot more, we have got to just make sure that their confidence continues to stay up because there's people on the team that are capable of doing that.

Q. I know there's still uncertainty of where you may end up, but do you feel like you, this team has done enough to be able to host the opening week?

JONI TAYLOR: Absolutely, I think we have earned the

right to host. I think we have we don't have any bad losses on our record. When you look at our record, everybody that we have lost to is ranked in the top-25, and I think we have proven that we can host and that we have earned that right. So obviously that decision is not up to me or our team and so we can't worry about that, we can only control the things we can and we try to do that by how we played and I think we showed the committee that we should host.

THE MODERATOR: All right, coach, thank you very much.

JONI TAYLOR: Thank you.

Q. With the youth that you got do you have to maybe bring them back after a loss like this to remind them that, as you just mentioned, the losses are to teams ranked in the top-25, and remind them they're better than what they might think they are at the moment?

JONI TAYLOR: It's a balance. Obviously you can't let them off the hook, there were things that we didn't do well today and they have got to feel that and they have got to understand that, so they don't get into thinking that it's okay. But you also have to remind them, hey, guys, like we finished second and tied for second in the conference after being picked 8th. So I think in the room we knew that could happen, that was our goal, and so it's still a lot to be proud of and a lot of basketball left to play. Young players take things so literally, you have to make sure that they understand where the improvements need to come and the mental aspect of playing in games like this against teams like this, but also make sure that they don't get too down on themselves.

Q. Two-part question. What type of challenges did A'ja Wilson pose throughout the game and how did Mackenzie remaining in foul trouble, having her minutes sort of restricted, how did that make things harder on your end with putting in a solid front line rotation?

JONI TAYLOR: So A'ja is just so relentless. She knows that she's going to get doubled every night, it comes from a different place every night and she still finds ways to score. And that's a credit to her. Every year you watch her game, she's gotten better and that's what you want from your best player, you want them to lead by example and she does that for them. I'm sure she practices as hard as she plays and when you got that it makes it difficult. Then everybody on the floor understands that the ball needs to go to her. But then when they have their opportunities, they take them. But I think for A'ja she posts you hard, she can drive you, she's shooting it now and so it's just a difficult matchup. In terms of Mac, any time she's in foul trouble and having to be subbed in and out of the game it makes it difficult for you to get into any type of rhythm offensively and she's one of our more verbal leaders on the floor as well, so it impacts you on different levels.