

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday March 4, 2018

Vic Schaefer
Victoria Vivians
Morgan William
Miss. St. Lady Bulldogs

South Carolina - 62, Mississippi State - 51

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

VIC SCHAEFER: Hats off to South Carolina. They played a tremendous basketball game. Dawn had her group ready. I thought they really played with a lot of juice today, a lot of energy. I thought they were really focused. I thought they, as they always do, they try to expose you a little bit. And, again, I just felt like going in this would be a game about toughness. I take great pride and I always talk about how tough our team is and I don't like it when we get out-toughed and I have to wear that as a head coach. That's nobody's responsibility but my own. And I'll wear that.

They out-rebounded us 15 and that's a big toughness stat. Thought we got some really good looks. I thought we settled a lot early in the first half for a lot of jump shots, but I thought they were all fairly good looks for the most part. We took some shots that were maybe not great shots. But we only had four offensive boards for the day, which is a big stat.

In the second half we played a little harder, played a little better, made a little bit of a run in the third quarter to get it back to five, I think. But at the end of the day we just didn't seem to have enough. We missed our fair share of layups tonight just like Tennessee. I think we counted Tennessee missed 20 other night in their loss. We missed our share.

But I believe this, y'all, I think God puts things in your life and gets you ready for something bigger down the line. This is not anything catastrophic. We played a heck of a team tonight, probably playing as good as anybody in the country and we got beat. We didn't -- obviously this is not one of our better games offensively. It's our poorest shooting game of the year. Typically kids that are knocking down shots and making



them tonight didn't make them. This has been my fear all year, for 32 games, going into No. 33, it was the night that we don't shoot it well, do we have enough against a Top-10 team to find a way to win a game? I ask our players that all the time, if your shot's not falling, what else are you doing to help me win and to help your team win? So this is the first time all year where we have had that. Again, I don't blame it on game three of three days. I don't think it has anything to do with that. I think you take your hat off to South Carolina. Those kids played extremely hard, especially defensively. If you would have told me before the game we were going to take -- hold A'ja to 6-15, I would probably have liked my chances. And then Jennings 1-5. I would have probably lost my house because that was my concern going in, was them at the four, five and paint points. And we did great job on them, but we let Ty Harris have a big night at point and Bianca made some big shots for us, and then we let the four player, Herbert Harrigan just really carry them in the first half.

So again, I thought at the four, five we did a really admirable job dealing with two great players. And they were my focus, really our focus defensively going in. So our kids did a good job with that, we just didn't quite have enough for the rest of them.

But again we have won every other game this year, y'all, giving up 62 points. Won most of them by 20. So just wasn't our day offensively and it just really frustrating from an offensive standpoint because it didn't matter what string we pulled, it just didn't work.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. For both players, can you talk about South Carolina's length and how they were defending today? They looked like they were helping, they made a lot of things, a lot of the looks that you guys were trying to get, they challenged those looks.

MORGAN WILLIAMS: Well, for me, just I can get around them. I just have to find the next person to get it to. I know I drove in a couple times and I got open looks for V and she got easy layups. But you can't just go in there and just try and lay the ball up. You have to go in there with a plan like you got to dish it out or you got to have a floater. So I think they really second-

guessed some of us tonight.

VICTORIA VIVIANS: I agree with Morgan. Going in, they're long, they kind of bothered us. I missed a couple layups and I feel like that we should have finished with the size that we had, but we didn't.

Q. Both of you, coach just said this isn't catastrophic. It can feel bad right now and I know it does because you guys have been here before, but the biggest part of the season is coming up still. How quickly do you think you can sort of turn the page on this and look ahead to the NCAA tournament?

MORGAN WILLIAMS: I think we can turn around and look at it real quick and get back to practice and work on things we need to work on to get better. We've got to get better every day. We've got a new season coming up. We can't just drop our heads and think it's the end of the world, like you said. So just looking to get better and buy in and continue to buy in. And if our shot's not going in, we got take it to the basket. And I think this game shows we need to put our head down and take it to the basket more often, because the shot's not going to always fall.

Q. For both of you, can you talk about when Teaira picked up her second foul and how that kind of affected things, how that took away an inside presence for you?

MORGAN WILLIAMS: Any time you start like that it's kind of hard, but I feel like V came in and did a good job on the inside game when she did get the ball. Seems like we missed her a lot of open times because in the huddle she told me, Mo, I'm open, get me the ball. So I was like, I'm telling my teammates we were going to look for you. But Teaira, she's a double double every night. She didn't get a double double tonight. I mean that's one player that we need to get a double double every game. So it took away some of our offense, some of our rebounds, offensively and defensively. And we didn't have anybody else to pick up the slack.

VICTORIA VIVIANS: It was my fault that she got the second foul. I was being lackadaisical to the ball and my girl drove me and she fouled, and I feel like without Teaira we lose a lot of height and a lot of rebounding like, again, like Morgan said, a lot of offense. If she's not rebounding the offense, scoring the ball, it's kind of tough for us to get easy shots in the paint.

Q. For both players, you guys hadn't lost in a long, long time. Can you describe the feeling today?

VICTORIA VIVIANS: It's not a good feeling. First loss senior year, first loss for freshmen. I mean it's tough, but I'm glad it's not NCAA when it's just the end of a

career. So I know that we have more practices and we're going to get better. I'm excited about the new season.

I don't feel too great about the loss. We lost and I didn't want to lose in the championship game of this SEC tournament. It's a bad way to lose, but I feel, like Morgan said, we got another season ahead of us, so we just got to finish it out in the post-season.

Q. Morgan, did it feel like it was a perfect storm with Teaira getting in foul trouble and there were layups that you guys would probably make 9.9 times out of 10, open threes. It just did not seem like your night as a team. Did it feel like that? That everything was kind of coming together to work against you guys?

MORGAN WILLIAMS: Yeah, it did, but I feel that we dug ourself a hole. The first two games of the SEC tournament, we didn't really do good the first quarter, the first half, and I feel like it carried on to this game. And we can't do that. We can't do that against ranked opponents or championship games like this. And it got us. We got our first loss. It's kind of hard to dig yourself out of a hole when you get down like that.

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

Q. Same question. Perfect storm, Teaira gets the second foul, you had look after look that was within the offense, the ones that you wanted, at least three layups that I counted that typically would fall. Just kind of have to shake it off and say hey, it was one of those days?

VIC SCHAEFER: I mean I just think it was. We got a lot of really good clean looks. We got a lot of shots that we typically make. Even when we were trying to make our run I think we missed two layups, we missed a wide open three. Those were shots that have been falling for us. So it was one of those days and really frustrating just because it's not happened in a long, long time. And if it happens a week from now and we get those same shots, we're probably going to win by 20. But sometimes these things happen. But, again, I just think your maturity, our lack of maturity showed with our, we were just really stubborn and wouldn't, we didn't, we just wouldn't adjust. I really implored them the entire first half to stop settling for jump shots and attack the rim and we just wouldn't. I thought Zion did a great job when she came in, bless her heart. She's on the scout team every day, she didn't get a lot of first team reps and I thought the kid was really good. So and we battled, I mean we fought. It was 30-19 at half, again, 30 points, I'm going to take 60, 62 most nights. But just one of those nights.

Q. Morgan was really spearheading the comeback for awhile in the third quarter. What was the decision process to go with Holmes in the fourth?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well she was 2-7, Holmes was 4-5. Jazz sometimes has a little more energy on the ball. Morgan got tired. When I pulled her in the third quarter, she was tired. I had to call a timeout. You've been covering me all year, I don't think I've called a timeout all year in the third quarter. But I had to call timeout with two-something on the clock because we were trying to get to the media, but I couldn't get there because there was no whistles and Morgan was struggling defensively. So I thought Jazz came in and did a really good job getting to the rim. And then we got Morgan back in, but, yeah, that was the reason why we took her out. She had really exerted a lot of energy defensively.

Q. Any thought about putting Teaira back in in the second quarter? What was your thought process on that?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I thought about it, but really and truly I thought we got to halftime with a 10 point deficit, I thought, hell, we're good. I mean I really did. I thought we're going to be all right. We were down 10 at the end of the first quarter at our place against them. And I mean I really felt good about it. So I felt like I, we had protected her and got through the first half. And in fact I told her right before we got up and went in, Tori was shooting two free throws, we were down 12, I said, hey, we're down 10 at half we got through it, we're good. She missed one of the two, but we were still good. I just felt really good about it. And I knew we had three fouls in the second half and when you're having to guard A'ja and Jennings, I mean you need to save as many as you can.

Q. What is the biggest thing you're going to take away after today's game going into the NCAA?

VIC SCHAEFER: So, again, I think you take away from today, okay, it wasn't a great day, but could you have still won the game? And if you believe you can still win the game, then what was something you could have done differently. As a coach I got to look at that, as players we've got to look at that, because I don't think the game was unwinnable. As bad as we played, I don't think it was unwinnable. But we just really struggled with the adjusting our game piece today.

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

VIC SCHAEFER: Thank you.