



2018 Southern Conference Basketball Tournament



No. 1 Mercer vs. No. 5 Samford

March 2, 2018

Mercer

Coach Susie Gardner

Opening statement:

"We have a lot of respect for Samford. We knew our defense was going to be key but we also knew we needed to shoot the ball better. Obviously playing really good defense and shooting exceptionally well and it was a great win for us... we wanted to be in the championship game and that's where we are."

On getting off to a fast start

"I think it's important in all games but what it shows me is we're having the snowball effect from senior night. The maturity of this team, we've been here before and know how important it is to get off to a quick start."

On shooting 59 percent from the floor

"We didn't do anything differently, Kahlia was obviously hot and KeKe also hit her first few shots. Shooting is somewhat contagious, we work on shooting a lot because we know we have to hit shots in the championship. I think it's a combination of our extra hard work in the gym."

Senior Kahlia Lawrence

On experience heading into the championship game

"The first thing is that it's not time to lose. We've worked really hard from last year to get back to this point. I have put a lot of focus into these first two games in order to make it to Sunday's game. We can't stop what we're doing."

On what needs to be improved on before Sunday's championship game

"You can really improve on anything. We didn't shoot 100%, we didn't get every rebound or box out every time. Going into Sunday's game we just have to try to play better than we did today."

On what makes this arena special

"First and foremost, what we're playing for. We came here to win the tournament or else you lose and you're out of it. We come out to compete and do whatever it takes to help our team win."

Samford

Coach Mike Morris

Opening statement:

"We got beat by a really good team that played really well. There is a reason why they are ranked No. 25 in the country and undefeated [in the Southern Conference]. [Today] was the best I have seen them play. That was the best they have played against us. They came out and punched us a couple of times and just took it to us. We did not have what we needed to fight back. As much as anything else, [Mercer] is a very good team, a deep team, an experienced team, a well-coached team and a talented team that was playing every well. I am definitely pleased with our effort, our team and our season. Hopefully this is something we can learn from. It's disappointing to be down. What Mercer did, where they are and how they are playing, it's where we want to get to."

On senior Hannah Nichols

"One of the beauties of coaching college, is that you get to see young women grow and develop... What she has done on the court is phenomenal. She developed into a rebounder and developed her game basketball-wise in terms of guarding. She will graduate in May. She has always been an engaged player for all five years... and to

see her mature through that is what it is all about. Our program is better off because Hannah Nichols came to our program, and I know she will be successful with whatever she chooses to do after Samford.”

On the future of Samford basketball...

“Out of our 13 players, 11 of them are freshman and sophomores with only one senior and one junior. Cassidy Williams will be our only senior next year, and I am looking forward to her leading our team. I was really pleased with the way last year’s freshman team developed into sophomores. We started five sophomores a lot during the season, and our freshman contributed at different times throughout the season. I am excited about this team. If you look at Mercer, they have had the same team for the past two to three years, and they have just gotten better. With the exception of Hannah [Nichols], we are going to have everybody back, and we are confident in everyone and how they play and contributed. Hopefully everybody gets better. We are really excited about the future of our team and our program.”

Samford redshirt senior Hannah Nichols

On her career at Samford

“It has been a blessing. I had to grow up a lot, and Samford had shown me that. I started as a freshman, and I had a rough start, and they kept believing in me and never turned their back. I have always had Samford in my corner, and it’s a blessing.”