

2019 Ingles Southern Conference Basketball Championships presented by General Shale



No. 1 Mercer vs. No. 8 Western Carolina March 7, 2019

Mercer Bears

Head coach Susie Gardner

"We outrebounded them 49-33, with Amanda (Thompson) getting 17, 14 defensive. So that was one of our goals. Our offense was a little off. We had 18 turnovers, which is atypical of us. Overall, I'm really pleased to get that game under our belts."

"Any time you play a team three times, it gets a little trickier to score for us as well. We know that we can always bring the intangibles of playing hard defense, boxing out, doing the things that no matter who your opponent is, we have control over that. We felt we had control over our defense and boxing out. It started with KeKe (Calloway) guarding the point guard. We knew there would be a lot of one-on-one play and we did a good job on that as well."

Guard Keke Calloway

On her defensive play being overshadowed by her scoring

"Like coach said, we put an emphasis on defense and boxing out, and I know I have the ability to get up and pressure the offensive team. I know they're not expecting that, so I just try to do that and get my team going."

On her shooting performances at U.S. Cellular Center

I wouldn't say it's so much the building. It's just knowing what's at stake and knowing it's tournament time, so you want to play your best basketball. I just try to focus and lock in and do whatever it takes to win."

Forward Amanda Thompson

On her 17 rebounds

"I had 14 defensive rebounds, but those were really team rebounds. That comes from everyone else boxing out. The ball drops in the middle and I'm just the one who grabs it."

Western Carolina

Head coach Stephanie McCormick

Opening statement

"Thank you to everybody for putting on the conference tournament. The City of Asheville has done such a nice job with the tournament. SoCon for continuing to have a legendary tournament and keeping it in its original format. I think that's important for the game and for our ladies to have a tournament feel and we definitely do that. Unfortunately, we take an early exit but to a very good Mercer team, Very well coached, very disciplined, very

focused team. I give my girls all the credit for continuing to fight and showing bright spots at times of adversity on the court. I wouldn't trade them for anything."

On getting open looks in the first half but the shots not falling

"Well like you said, they were open looks. We were getting some really good looks and I think that kind of set the tone for offense for the entirety of the game for the most part, unfortunately. I think we were a little jacked-up, so to speak. We have a lot of freshmen that have never been to the tournament before and it's a new season, it's a big season and I tend to make a big deal out of it so I probably got them a little on edge to start with and they missed some shots that we would normally make."

On how demoralizing is it to have a solid defensive effort and the shots aren't falling at the other end

"Well, it's hard to continue to fight, but we're tough enough and we've gone through the season and continued to keep putting our best foot forward as best we can. And it is, when you're playing such good defense and getting those stops and getting those turnovers against a really good Mercer team and to hold them to 55 points, under 60, and not having your shots go in, it hurts. It stings a little bit."

On how encouraging the team's effort was for next year

"Very much so. We'll return everyone. Unfortunately, I feel bad for our seniors so we tend not to talk about the next year until they've had a chance to process the fact that they'll be moving on. But yeah, I feel like there's a big bright spot in the future of what we have coming back and what we have coming in and just growing from what we had this year. I have four freshman averaging over 25 minutes a game over the course of the season leads us to believe that we should be in pretty good shape and Jewel (Smalls) had a tough night tonight but she has shown, and obviously you guys voted her freshman of the year and the coaches on the all-rookie team, so it's just the beginning for us as far as the future is concerned."