

# QUOTES | GAME #1



**NO. 13 CLEMSON 69, NO. 12 VIRGINIA TECH 56**

## **CLEMSON TIGERS**

**COACH AUDRA SMITH**

**NIKKI DIXON**

**NYILAH JAMISON MYERS**

COACH AUDRA SMITH: First of all, I want to give a lot of credit to Virginia Tech, thought they played a very, very great game. And definitely accolades to my team and how they came out in the first half. They played with a huge sense of urgency. A dire sense of the fact that they were not ready to go home and they were going to give all they had and they did.

I felt like our defense is what catapulted us into playing such a well balanced game. I was happy with how well they played, and how hard they play. As I told them, we had to get it done on the defensive end, and we also had to make sure that we rebounded very well. I'm definitely proud of the fact that they came out with a lot of sense of urgency, enthusiasm and put everything they had in them today.

Q. After losing to Virginia Tech so decisively last week, what does it mean to turn the tables and win this game so decisively, and how do you explain the turnaround?

NIKKI DIXON: I think that today, tonight we played with like revenge, and that's the biggest thing, is that we can't let a team pound on us twice, it's not going to happen. We worked too hard.

NYILAH JAMISON MYERS: I also feel like we were ready for this game. We kind of helped with the practice. We were really into it. Like the whole team was into it. We felt what the coaches feel, what they put into the game. We put all that into the game. You want to come out with a win, you don't want to fall short.

Q. Coach, you talked yesterday about the job that Ugoka and Panousis did, they scored 36 points last time, and you held them to 2 points today. What about the job you did defensively?

COACH AUDRA SMITH: You have to give credit to these guys, give them a pat on the back in terms of the scouting report. We put the onus on them and do the scouting report and how they were going to defend them. They both had big games against us.

So their whole focus was anytime there was a ball screen they were going to make sure they limited touches as much as possible and they were in their face.

Ugoka, the biggest thing they wanted to play off of her and allow her to be a jump shooter. And that allowed her to get penetration to the baskets and also limit her touches. It was a team effort. They did a really, really good team effort.

I asked, What do you want, to go 2 3 or want to go man? I'm a players' coach. They're on the court and they know what they're comfortable with and what they feel like they can be successful with, they did a good job of keying in and making sure that they weren't they didn't have as great of a night against us at Virginia Tech.

Q. How about offensive, what did you do better than last week?

COACH AUDRA SMITH: We executed better. We went to an offense, a couple of offense where we utilized a lot of ball screens. They had problems with us, when we start utilizing our ball screen, playing 2 man game action, we got to the basket a lot. We got some things inside. We did not get the ball inside well enough down there when we played them.

We did a good job. We were patient. We took care of the ball a lot better than we did the first time. And we made shots. That's the key, when you make shots, then it takes a lot of pressure off of you, and you can set up your defense and play defense.

I felt like everybody was in it, all their eyes were focused on me. Everybody was focused. I could feel their energy. When I know they're in tune to what's going on, I know we have a great chance of coming out with a victory.

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Q. You had a career high today with 19 points. Can you just talk about what that means to you and also to have it happening in the ACC tournament here.

NYILAH JAMISON MYERS: I feel like all season I've been trying to work on my consistency. And I feel like it was be there, whatever you need to do, be there. I'm just happy that I could finish with the free throws today.

Q. Ugoka went to the bench with the two quick fouls, and with her out, you built that 21 6 lead, that was it, game over. Can you talk about once she went to the bench how you were able to take advantage of the situation and you could take control of the game.

COACH AUDRA SMITH: She's such an offensive threat. That took a lot of pressure off us defensively. Not to take anything against the other kids on the floor, they're very good players, as well. We didn't have to spend as much energy doubling on her and that took pressure off of us on the defensive end. We didn't have to focus on as many offensive threats.

Then offensively for us, we were able to execute a lot better. She's a strong kid inside, she's a strong defender. We were able to finish around the basket. That was key to get her in foul trouble and get her out of the game and make other people have to step up and contribute.

We did a really good job on the other players that came off the bench, that were on the floor and we did not allow them to get involved.

That's always part of our pregame speech, as well, is the fact that great players, you're not going to be able to shut them down completely, but you can contain them. But role players and players that are coming off the bench, you have to limit them. You can't let them get six or eight points, it makes up for the points you're taking away from the star players.

Q. It's been a few years since this program has won a game here at the ACC tournament. What does that mean to each of you to have one under your belts?

NIKKI DIXON: It means everything in the world to this program, period, because we have such an awesome fan base and awesome families that come in and help and support us. And they're there at Littlejohn every night when we play. It means a lot because we can give back to them.

We had a good fan base that came all the way from Clemson. We want to make our fans, like we appreciate them, and we want to give them back for all the coming to our games. It means a lot for this team, period, because of all the adversity we have faced since I've been here three years, and to our seniors, I know that they're jumping for joy right now. This is the start of a change. And that's the biggest thing is change.

Q. Coach and Nikki, just looking forward to tomorrow. You guys played really well back in January. I think you had 19. What's got to improve just a little bit from that game to have a chance tomorrow?

COACH AUDRA SMITH: I agree. I felt like we played 37 minutes of really good basketball. And then the last 3 minutes was just I felt like Brittney Sykes woke up. And that was it for us.

But I feel like for us, again, it's going to be on the defensive end. They have some really good threats from the outside to the inside. But for us, we have to we've got to get some rest. We're limited in terms of our numbers, we have to get some rest. We have to be focused tomorrow, we have to be ready to defend. And I've been in tournament situations quite a bit, and people always ask, Would you rather have the buy, would you rather play the first day? And I think playing the first day is really good. You get all the kinks out. You get accustomed to the floor, you get accustomed to the rims and everything. So you get the juices kind of flowing.

So I feel for us the biggest thing we're going to have to do tomorrow is to defend, we're going to have to limit touches, and finish around the basket. We did a good job of finishing. There were layups we missed. We have to make sure we have the opportunities around the rim that we finish.

NIKKI DIXON: Basically what she said. We played well, really well against Syracuse. We were there, we were

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in it a hundred percent. We just have to limit Briana Butler and Sykes, and contain the post players, and it's our game, anyone's game to win, this is why the tournament is so exciting. Whoever shows up is who wins. That's what we're looking forward to tomorrow. Showing up and being there a hundred percent. If we go out there, we give it everything we've got we should get after them.

Q. What helped you guys dominate on the boards and especially the first half?

COACH AUDRA SMITH: Well, I felt like when Nikki was a significant factor with 12 rebounds, and that's what we've been telling the girls the whole year is they have to rebound down rather than watching the action. As post players, you're down there boxing out, bumping and grinding and trying to get a tip on it. And she did a good job of grasping the rebound.

So I felt like it was a good team effort. We made a conscious effort to box out and to limit them to one and done. What did they end up with, 8 offensive rebounds, but I felt like we played a couple of those came out of a couple came off the free throw line. We made a conscious effort of boxing out, take the toughest contested shot and find a way to come up with the rebound.

Q. Building on what coach just said, they have really dominated the post in the last game on you. As one of the big girls on the team, what was the mindset like for you guys coming into the game and the key to sort of flipping that script around?

NYILAH JAMISON MYERS: We were just telling the guards, we can box the post out, they have to come and get the rebound, it's not about numbers, as long as we get the ball. We want the guards to come down and pick it up, because it's just open space.

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## **VIRGINIA TECH HOKIES**

**COACH DENNIS WOLFF  
UJU UGOKA  
KELSEY CONYERS**

COACH DENNIS WOLFF: I'd like to congratulate Clemson, first, I think that they had a better approach to the game. It's disappointing on our end, but I thought their team rebounded from what happened last week and came after the game the right way. So congratulations to them.

Secondly, we picked a bad time to play our bad game. And it would be tough for me to sit down and look at it from a basketball standpoint. There were things that were done the way we normally could do them. I'm proud of our seniors, proud of Uju and Monet, they carried themselves great. I'm disappointed.

Q. After winning against Clemson so decisively last week, how surprised are you to have the exact opposite to lose so decisively in the rematch today, and how do you explain that turnaround?

UJU UGOKA: Definitely we were not prepared tonight. We didn't come out with the right effort like they did.

KELSEY CONYERS: I don't think that necessarily that was the reason for the outcome of the game. Coach warned us all weekend that we were going to have to come in forgetting that and play as hard as we did. So I don't think that's the reason for the outcome at all. I think that all of us came in knowing that they're a good team. They've had some good wins. But we just didn't carry out our offense or defensive principles as well as we should have.

Q. How do you explain from last week to this week, the big turnaround in scores?

COACH DENNIS WOLFF: Well, you know, I think that there's always going to be a little advantage to the team, if the teams are relatively close, there's going to be a little advantage on a game like that. And I thought they would be able to focus their team a little bit better.

So I want to credit Audra, again, for what she did. I'm just disappointed. We had a bad start to the game, and that really hurt us. We got in foul trouble. We missed open shots. And that got us to lose our composure. So I did the best job I could, but I didn't probably do a good enough job of trying to impress on the kids that this could happen if we didn't approach it the right way.

Q. Dennis, you outscored them from the field. I wonder if you feel you sent them to line too much, you fouled too much or is that just a reflection of fouling at the end?

COACH DENNIS WOLFF: No, I think we were fouling them way too much during the game. I think that we didn't we put ourselves in some bad positions. They're not a great outside shooting team. So we didn't manage the ball screens the right way. And then we didn't rebound the ball. The first game they got five or six offensive rebounds, and it says they got nine, I thought the first half they got way too many second chances.

We fouled them. It's not like we could say we didn't foul them. We gave them an opportunity to get points that way, which is not a good thing for any team.

Q. Uju picked up those two quick fouls and went to the bench. And by the time she went back in the game they were up 21-6. How much of that, not having Uju in the game, early in the game like that, how much does that change the whole outcome of the game?

COACH DENNIS WOLFF: Well, obviously we needed Uju in the game. My coaching philosophy throughout my career is you want to manage the fouls the best you can in the first half. So historically for me when somebody has two fouls I end up taking them out. We've gone against that a few times this year. We got out of the first half without Uju having a third foul. But having a third foul, we're not, as a team, constituted well enough to not have any one of these kids available. If we're having to sit somebody for a long time we end up finding ourselves in a bad position.

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Q. For everyone, did they defend you any differently this time around than last week? What made it a tough shooting game for you guys?

KELSEY CONYERS: No, I think they guarded us, for the most part, the same during the match up. They did play a little bit more out on us, taking away a lot of the outside shots, and they played a little bit more man than their match up zone, but overall it was similar to the other game.

UJU UGOKA: Same thing, it was similar to the other game. They were just more aggressive. And it was like more aggressive, but they played us the same way.

Q. What was the effect of their defense today?

COACH DENNIS WOLFF: I think it's half and half. I think that they played good defense, I don't want to take anything away from them, but we had a lot of open shots. And this kind of mirrored Sunday at Maryland, where we missed shots that appeared to be open. And it really rattled our confidence in some of the girls. I think more than it should.

Q. Here you are one and done again. How surprising or frustrating is it to once again be going home on the first day?

COACH DENNIS WOLFF: I don't want to say it's surprising. It's disappointing. We're disappointed. The girls this is Uju's second ACC tournament, Kelsey was hurt last year, so the history of it for them is just but for the program, there's no question we're disappointed today. I have to kind of think about where we're at. Because I told the girls in the locker room I thought for the most part they worked extremely hard throughout the season. They gave us a lot of really good games. And we just picked the worst day to play arguably our worst game. I'm going to take full responsibility for that.

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