

# SPORTS



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## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



Ta'niya Latson passes the ball during the Sweet 16 against Oklahoma on March 28 in Sacramento, California. THIEN-AN TRUONG, GETTY IMAGES

# SC, Staley get big Latson game they expected

Lulu Kesin  
Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

SACRAMENTO, CA — It was South Carolina women's basketball 12th Women's NCAA Tournament Sweet 16 game but for transfer Ta'Niya Latson, it was her first.

But that didn't appear to matter, as Latson scored a game-high 28 points for the No. 1 seed Gamecocks (34-3) in the 94-68 victory over No. 4 seed Oklahoma (26-8) on March 28.

"I was feeling really good tonight," Latson said. "I woke up on the right side of the bed. My teammates and my coaches, they believed in me. I just had to go out there with confidence. That was the game plan."

She finished 7-of-11 from the floor and went 4-of-4 from the 3-point line, including a four-point play.

South Carolina will play No. 3 seed TCU (32-5) in the Elite Eight on March 30 at 9 p.m. ET (ESPN).

Latson came to South Carolina after three seasons at Florida State where she averaged 25.2 points but never went further than the second round of March Madness. She came into the game averaging 14.3 points for the Gamecocks.

Her Sweet 16 debut began with eight of the Gamecocks' first 12 points.

For Latson it wasn't just about per-

forming well on the biggest stage. South Carolina's only SEC loss of the season was to Oklahoma on Jan. 22, a 94-82 overtime defeat. Latson went 1-of-10 from the floor in the first meeting, finishing with six points, which tied or the fourth-worst game in her career.

"She's a great player," Oklahoma guard Payton Verhulst said. "We were just trying to scout them in different ways and figuring out different ways we can stop different people. When you have lineups like them, you can't just pick one person. Obviously she's a great player. There's a bunch of great players on their team. So for us we were just trying to adjust and we just couldn't adjust fast enough."

Raven Johnson, coach Dawn Staley's fifth-year point guard and Latson's high school teammate, was just as strong from the jump as Latson. She had 16 points in the first half and finished with 18. Their combined 46 points was their best this season, surpassing their combined 41 from the SEC Tournament semifinal game vs LSU.

"When I see the ball go in for her, I'm like 'Yes', like my eyes get big," Johnson said. "Ta'Niya, I think she deserves everything that's coming her way. I think this is just the beginning."

Latson and Johnson won three state titles together in high school in Atlanta and reunited for one college season this

year. "Yeah, it's such a surreal moment," Latson said. "Being on the sideline, being next to her even in practice it's just, like, 'Dang, I'm playing with my best friend from high school.' We cherish the moments that we have on the floor and we hope to win a championship together. It's just a blessing to be together in our last year together."

Latson shot 39.1% in her first NCAA Tournament run, 45.2% in her second and is now shooting a career-best 56% from the floor in March Madness games.

"Ta'Niya's been champing at the bit to get to that level of just being super efficient and playing free," Staley said. "I just want her to continue to do that ... if you want to advance to the Final Four, you're probably going to need another performance like that."

Tessa Johnson poured in 14 points, including a 9-0 third-quarter run. What did Johnson see from Latson's first Sweet 16 performance?

"I saw Ta'Niya Stinkin Latson. That's what I expect to see the rest of these three games," Johnson said.

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## COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# Why Dabo said Clemson has 'clarity' in QB competition after spring game

Derrian Carter  
Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

CLEMSON — Exiting spring practice, Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney said the Tigers have a clear pecking order at quarterback.

"We came out of the spring, (Christopher Vizzina) one, and (freshman Tait Reynolds) two. It's not close," Swinney said March 28 after Clemson's spring game. "Those two guys separated, and that's just where we are."

Swinney added he believes Reynolds, a three-star signee, can challenge for the starting job over Vizzina, who entered spring practice in the "pole position" to be Clemson's starter after waiting for three seasons.

"Ain't nobody got lifetime contracts around here," Swinney said. "... CV didn't do anything to back up, but Tait has done everything to move forward."

Swinney said Reynolds was battling for No. 2 but "cleared that" and was elevated as the clear No. 2 in Clemson's quarterback depth chart after the team's scrimmage on March 11.

In Clemson's spring game, Reynolds was 7-of-10 for 74 yards, rushed for a score and was sacked five times between the Orange and White teams.

To protect quarterbacks, plays were blown dead when a defender got near one and ruled a sack/tackle. The Orange team consisted of Clemson's first-team players, and the White team featured second- and third-team players.

With the White team, Reynolds struggled, completing 3 of 4 passes for 37 yards and rushing for minus-16 yards on five attempts in four possessions. Four of his sacks came with this unit.

Swinney was vocal about Reynolds' miscues, calling out on the stadium's microphone that the freshman should have thrown the ball quicker on a play and saying he should have kept the ball on a read-option play in the red zone.

But, when Reynolds switched to the Orange team, he played more comfortably. He was 4-of-6 passing for 37 yards and a rushing score in one drive.

"He's got an elite arm talent and (is) big, strong," Swinney said. "... There's some operational things he's got to be better at, but he just got better and better and better."

Like Swinney said, Vizzina has not lost the No. 1 job. The junior was 10-of-18 passing for 95 yards and a touchdown and rushed for 14 yards on two attempts over three drives. It took the

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## MARCH MADNESS

# South Carolina vs TCU predictions in Elite Eight

Lulu Kesin  
Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - SOUTH CAROLINA

SACRAMENTO, CA — No. 3 TCU took down No. 10 Virginia in the Sweet 16, preventing South Carolina women's basketball coach Dawn Staley from coaching against her college team in the Elite Eight of the Women's NCAA Tournament.

The No. 1 seeded Gamecocks (34-3) will play the No. 3 seeded Horned Frogs (32-5) on March 30 (9 p.m. ET, ESPN) in Golden 1 Center.

South Carolina beat No. 4 seed Oklahoma 94-68 in the Sweet 16 before TCU beat Virginia 79-69.

The only time these two teams met was in 2024 when South Carolina won 85-52.

## Dawn Staley has only coached against TCU once

This will be somewhat of an unfamiliar matchup for Staley, who has only coached one game against TCU, and the 2024-25 roster was much different than what she'll see on March 30.

Last year's TCU team was powered by players like Hailey Van Lith and Sedona Prince. Now it's Olivia Miles who is running the show.

Only one starter from last year's team returned, and TCU added six transfer players.

Coach Mark Campbell is in his third season but has been to two of the last three NCAA Tournaments. Last year the Horned Frogs lost to Texas in the

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Texas Christian University Horned Frogs guard Olivia Miles (5) and forward Marta Sutrez (7) embrace after a called foul during the Sweet 16 game against the Virginia Cavaliers at Golden 1 Center in Sacramento. ED SZCZEPANSKI/IMAGN IMAGES

# Raven Johnson reacts to seeing her face on Dawn Staley's shirt in Sweet 16 win

Lulu Kesin

Greenville News

USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

SACRAMENTO, CA — South Carolina women's basketball coach Dawn Staley showed up to Golden 1 Center in a Gucci jacket over a T-shirt that featured her starting point guard Raven Johnson's face.

Playa Society, a women's sports clothing brand, made new custom Raven Johnson T-shirts. The shirts went on sale March 20, and by March 28, Staley was wearing one as the No. 1 seed Gamecocks (34-3) beat No. 4 seed Oklahoma (26-8) 94-68 in the Sweet 16.

"I see my beautiful self," Johnson said when asked what it looked like seeing Staley coach in the shirt. "I'm happy she's wearing my shirt. I mean, she has a beautiful person on her chest."

Assistant coach Khadijah Sessions and forward Adhel Tac, who didn't play due to injury, were wearing the shirts too.

Playa Society has done custom South Carolina shirts, including a special line for Staley when her statue was revealed in Columbia last May.

Johnson had 18 points on 8-of-11 shooting with three assists, two rebounds, one steal and zero turnovers in the win over Oklahoma.

Staley advanced to her sixth consecutive Elite Eight, which marks a fifth straight for Johnson.

South Carolina is playing the winner of No. 3 TCU and No. 10 Virginia on March 30 (9 p.m. ET, ESPN).

Over the first three March Madness games, the Gamecocks have beaten their opponents by an average of 45 points and were six points shy of a third 100-point game. Staley was asked about the balance of having a disciplined team while also having fun, including things like wearing a shirt to represent one of her players.

"I think for us and how we've operated at South Carolina, we just gotta prioritize and we've got to compartmentalize. There's a place for everything that you want to do. It's about prioritizing,"



Head coach Dawn Staley of the South Carolina Gamecocks reacts against the Oklahoma Sooners during the fourth quarter in the Sweet Sixteen of the 2026 NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament at Golden 1 Center on March 28. THIEN-AN TRUONG/GETTY IMAGES

Staley said. "For me, they probably call me a little bit of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde because I give each moment its place. If I feel like laughing in the middle of practice, I'm going to crack up. But I can turn it off to get back into where we were. I think they've probably taken a little bit out of that."

For Johnson especially, Staley often points out how unserious she can be but how she turns it on in a matter of moments. Despite Johnson's "comedic" side, she's one of the most successful players to wear a South Carolina uniform.

If she wins another national champi-

onship, she'll be the only player to be there for three of Staley's four titles.

"I want them to be who they are," Staley said. "It's not always being serious. It's not always being in the gym. There's a balance to everything we do. We just try to prepare them for life, and life isn't just one-dimensional."

## SPORTS ON TV MONDAY, MARCH 30 (ALL TIMES EASTERN)

### COLLEGE SOFTBALL

7 p.m.

SECN — South Carolina at Mississippi State

### COLLEGE BASKETBALL (WOMEN'S)

2:30 p.m.

ESPNU — WBIT Tournament, Semifinal, Columbia vs. Wisconsin, Wichita, Kan.

5 p.m.

ESPNU — WBIT Tournament, Semifinal, Kansas vs. BYU, Wichita, Kan.

7 p.m.

ESPN — NCAA Tournament, Regional 3,

Final, Michigan vs. Texas

9 p.m.

ESPN — NCAA Tournament, Regional 4, Final, South Carolina vs. TCU

### MLB BASEBALL

4:10 p.m.

ESPN UNLIMITED — Minnesota at Kansas City

6:40 p.m.

FS1 — Pittsburgh at Cincinnati

8 p.m.

MLBN — MLB Big Inning, whip-around

coverage of the evening's games

9:40 p.m.

FS1 — San Francisco at San Diego

### NBA BASKETBALL

7 p.m.

PEACOCK — Philadelphia at Miami

8 p.m.

PEACOCK — Chicago at San Antonio

9:30 p.m.

PEACOCK — Detroit at Oklahoma City

### NHL HOCKEY

7 p.m.

NHLN — Pittsburgh at N.Y. Islanders

### SOCCER (MEN'S)

11:50 a.m.

FS1 — International Friendly, European Qualifiers, Moldova at Cyprus

2:30 p.m.

FS1 — International Friendly, European Qualifiers, Germany at Ghana

### TENNIS

11 a.m.

TENNIS — WTA, Charleston Open, Early Rounds

## Clemson

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offense until the third drive to score, though.

Vizzina is also the most experienced quarterback on Clemson's roster, playing in 14 games and making one start, which came in 2025 against SMU with Cade Klubnik out.

All the other quarterbacks: Reynolds, Chris Denson, Brock Bradley and Trent Pearman, have all combined for eight appearances and no starts.

Still, Reynolds's growth has helped simplify Clemson's quarterback compe-

tition. Swinney and his staff must figure out who will be the team's starter before facing LSU and new coach Lane Kiffin in its season opener on Sept. 5 at Tiger Stadium in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"We're coming out of spring with some clarity, and I think we needed that, the team needed that, the players needed that and I think they all knew that," Swinney said. "Coming out of it, now, with two clear guys, and we can go into the summer."

### What Dabo Swinney said about QB Chris Denson

Denson, a former three-star signee who flipped his commitment from

Coastal Carolina, entered the spring as the likeliest challenger to Vizzina to be Clemson's starter in 2026.

He appeared in two games in his freshman season in 2025. He had his best game against Furman, entering in the second half to go 4-for-4 for 22 yards and a touchdown, and he rushed for 108 yards and a score.

However, he has fallen down the depth chart, not playing in the spring game until the third quarter, being the fifth quarterback to play and only receiving two drives.

"Denson is physically as gifted as anybody we got but just not where he needs to be from a passing-game standpoint to compete like he needs to," Swin-

ney said. "He's a guy that has a decision to make. If he stays at quarterback, he will play for us. He'll have a role. He's too talented."

Swinney said it would be Denson's decision to change his position.

"He'll keep getting better, but we play in five months, and we got to keep moving, and we got to put the team in position to go win," Swinney said.

*Derrian Carter covers Clemson athletics for The Greenville News and the USA TODAY Network. Email him at DCarter@usatodayco.com and follow him on X, formerly known as Twitter, @DerrianCarter00*

## SC

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Elite Eight.

### Olivia Miles is TCU's star point guard

Olivia Miles transferred to TCU from Notre Dame in a shocking offseason move after Miles was projected as a top-5 WNBA draft pick.

The senior guard is averaging 19.4 points, 7.2 rebounds and 6.6 assists, coming off 28 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists in the Sweet 16.

She's fifth in the nation in assists, 42nd in double-doubles with 12 total,

and leads the nation in triple doubles with six.

Miles wasn't healthy and didn't play for Notre Dame against South Carolina in the 2023-24 season opener, so this is Staley's first time scouting against one of the nation's top ball handlers.

### Marta Suarez, Clara Silva vs Joyce Edwards, Madina Okot

After fighting through Oklahoma's post defense, South Carolina's post players have a new challenge in TCU's Marta Suarez. The 6-foot-3 Suarez is averaging 16.8 points and 7.4 rebounds, coming off 33 points and 10 rebounds in Sweet 16.

She's tied with Miles with 12 double-doubles.

Clara Silva, 6-foot-7 center, is in her first season with TCU after one with Kentucky last year. Silva won't be impacted by the SEC's physicality given her freshman year experience and is averaging 9.3 points and 7.4 rebounds for TCU.

She didn't score against South Carolina last year at Kentucky but had two assists and a steal in seven minutes of action.

### TCU leads Big 12 in points allowed, rebounds and point differential

The Horned Frogs have the top defense in the Big 12, allowing an average of 55.9 points per game. They are also first in rebounds with 41.7 per game and in point differential at +21.4.

### South Carolina vs TCU prediction in Elite Eight

**South Carolina 84, TCU 72:** This could be the closest game for South Carolina this tournament and will come down to execution. But despite almost three 100-point games, the Gamecocks say they still have room to grow with their best basketball left to play.

Raven Johnson vs Olivia Miles will be the main guard matchup, with Clara Silva vs Madina Okot at the center spot and Marta Suarez vs Joyce Edwards. So expect players like Tessa Johnson or Ta'Niya Latson to try to step up for Staley.