

**#7/7 Tennessee 86 Vanderbilt 73**  
**Jan. 7, 2018 | Knoxville, Tenn. | Thompson-Boling Arena**

## **Vanderbilt Head Coach Stephanie White Quick Quotes**

### ***Opening Statement:***

"I'm really proud of our team for battling. I thought we did a good job of competing. We came into a tough environment with a lot of adversity and played a national championship-competitive team. I was proud of our team for the way we played. I'm proud of our team for our attention to detail. We had some breakdowns. There's no doubt about it. We can't afford 21 turnovers. We can't afford to give up 17 o-boards. For the most part, we were coming in and just looking for our team to fight and compete, execute the game plan. For the most part, we did that."

### ***On Tennessee's pressure towards the end of the game:***

"It was a major factor. That's an area of growth for us. When teams pressure us, we've got to be able to calm our minds. We've got to be able to execute our press break. We have young perimeter players, young guards. I think finding some calm in the storm, so to speak, is a growth area for us. That kind of pressure with that kind of length and that kind of athleticism that we see in the SEC is hard for us to simulate in practice. So, we have to do as good of a job as we can. We have to prepare them as well as we can. Then, we're just going to learn on the job every day. We're thrown into the fire to be able to find a way to calm ourselves through that. That 10-0 run they had in the fourth, due to our turnovers, was a problem for us.

### ***On being encouraged moving forward by her team's play against Tennessee***

"I'm not huge in moral victories, but at the same time, the growth area that we had in terms of our competitiveness and our fight, that's what we were looking for. It's not as much about the scoreboard. Certainly, we want to win and put ourselves in position to win. We want to give ourselves a chance, but we grew a lot tonight in terms of our competitive toughness, in terms of our mental toughness, in terms of our ability to play with multiple levels of effort. We asked our players to be one percent better in every area, and we were tonight. That's what we have to continue to do. We're in a rebuilding process. It's not going to happen overnight. We know it's not going to happen overnight, but if we can continue to grow and get better every day throughout our process, then we're moving in the right direction. Today, we took a step forward in the right direction."

### ***On matching someone up with Mercedes Russell:***

"She's a nightmare, yes. She's really hard to matchup with, not just because of her size, but her poise, her strength. I was able to cover Russell when we were doing TV, when she was a freshman and when she was a sophomore. (That was) when she didn't want that contact, when she was a little bit passive wanting the ball. Her development, particularly over the last two years, has been phenomenal. She's a pro. There's no doubt about it. She's hungry

for the ball. She puts this team on her shoulders, in a way that you don't see a lot of bigs do. She's so poised and mobile. I'm not sure there is anybody in the country that can match up with her. She's really a rock and a glue for them."

***On producing offensively against Tennessee:***

"We know that we can shoot the ball when we get a chance. Typically, we like to play from the inside out. With their size, we knew that we had to be able to knock some shots down on the perimeter to start, and we did. That opened it up for Chelsie (Hall), in particular in the second half, to be able to attack. Tennessee has changed up their defenses a lot throughout the season, playing some man, playing some zone. We wanted to try and spread the floor, keep them off balance, no matter which defense they were in. I thought our ability to understand what we were trying to get in our offense, regardless of what they were playing, was much better today."

***On scouting versus playing Tennessee:***

"I don't know that it changed other than the fact that they look big on film, but they look really big in person. When you have a group of freshmen like they have, that are so poised. I'm sure Holly (Warlick) doesn't always think that, but when you watch them from the outside, they just play with a maturity level that you don't see amongst freshmen. They're all very talented. Then, you have Jaime Nared and Mercedes Russell that are those anchors that really help them from a leadership standpoint, that help them in time and score situations, that help them when teams are making runs. They're a complete team. Their returning players all got better, and their freshmen are coming in and making impacts. This is a team that can compete for a national championship. There's no doubt about it."

## **Vanderbilt Guard Cierra Walker Quick Quotes**

***On finding a groove against Tennessee:***

"This is our rival team, and we wanted to come out and be competitive, to play hard. We've been struggling with communication and stuff in practice. We knew that we needed to come out and prove ourselves, show that we belong to be here. Throughout practice yesterday, we had a good competitive spirit. We were competing. We were working hard. We were communicating. We worked super hard on our zone defense, and I think that you could tell that in the game. Because, we were communicating super well; when to bump, when not to bump. Just overall, our team wanted to come out and compete against our rival."

## **Vanderbilt Guard Chelsie Hall Quick Quotes**

***On her mindset going against Tennessee's size:***

"They were huge. We were coming off the pick-and-roll, so I knew that once I saw (Mercedes) Russell come out, that I had the open lane. Then, if they crashed, I kicked it out to my teammates."