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# Aliyah Boston Pens 'The Train Keeps Moving', Named First-Team AP-All American as Her NCAA Tournament Appearance Nears

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Ahead of the NCAA Women's Tournament slated to begin for the No. 1 seeded team in the Hemisfair Region, South Carolina Gamecocks on Sunday at 6 p.m. against Mercer on ESPN, the Gamecocks center and Virgin Islander Aliyah Boston, wrote a letter in the Players Tribune explaining how tough it was not to play in the NCAA tournament last year, and how hard she has been on herself to be great.

The letter was published on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. The Associated Press announced that Ms. Boston made the AP First-Team All-American Wednesday.

This season Ms. Boston has started in all of South Carolina's 26 games and has averaged 13.7 points, 11.7 rebounds and recorded 2.85 blocks per game. Her rebounds and blocked shot numbers rank her in the top 15 for those categories nationally. She had 15 double-doubles this season, tied for ninth most in the country. Her season high in points, 28, came against Florida in December.

The Players Tribune is a website that publishes athletes' letters to the public.

The letter opened with the line, "We were destined to win the whole thing last year." In it, Ms. Boston explains that after a 32-1 season in her freshman year, she felt confident going to the NCAA.

She spoke on how two of South Carolina's top players last year, Tyasha Harris and Mikiah Hebert Harrigan, missed the chance to win their senior year NCAA Tournament, referring to them as "Two S.C. Legends. Two WNBA first-round draft picks. But also, two amazing former teammates who missed out on their chance to win it all last year."

"I can't possibly write up something about this tournament and the journey we're about to go on, without giving a hat tip to two of the best leaders and mentors I've ever been around," Ms. Boston added.

Ms. Boston also spoke about her head coach Dawn Staley in the letter — an olympic gold medalist in 1996 as the point guard of the USA national team — who she said repeatedly told the team this season, "That was last year! It's in the past. The train keeps on moving!"

Ms. Boston said in the letter, "Coach, I got you. I'm not going to get into how special that team was or how we were about to go down in history as one of the best college basketball teams ever. None of that. I promise. I'm going to focus on this year, and this NCAA tournament run we're about to start up."

She also spoke of her team's expectations. "We're looking to run the table," adding, "I just want to win so bad."

Ms. Boston referred to a game this season where she missed a put-back layup at the end of regulation that would've won against another top contender in this year's NCAA Tournament before the team lost by four points in overtime.

She explained, "I thought there was less time on the clock than there was, and I rushed an easy shot. A shot I usually make 100 out of 100 times. And still, to this day, I can't completely get that moment out of my head." Since the miss, Ms. Boston has thought about it constantly. "If you'd just taken another split second, you would've won it for your team."

Ms. Boston talked about that moment with her teammates so much that they told her, "Aliyah ... please stop."

Later in the letter, Ms. Boston said, "I can be pretty tough on myself. I know we have everything we need to do something special as a team, and I just want to help us make that happen."

The full letter can be read [here](#).

Ms. Boston knows her team has the tools to compete with any team in the country. "Our starting five is no joke, and then you have a bunch of players who really could be starting on most teams in the country."

It was announced on Monday night Ms. Boston and South Carolina were awarded one of the four No. 1 seeds in the NCAA tournament and will play Mercer on Sunday at 6:00 p.m. on ESPN to begin their tournament during the Women's NCAA Selection Show.

The Gamecocks went 22-4 this season and played a difficult schedule. Three of their losses this season were against some of the top contenders for the national title in very competitive games. They lost to two of the other No. 1 seeds, Uconn 63-59 in overtime in February and NC State in early December 54-46. They also lost to a No. 2 seed, Texas A&M, 65-57 in late February.

Sixty-four teams make the women's NCAA tournament and are split into four regions, with each region being seeded 1-16. 31 teams automatically qualified by winning their conference tournament and 33 teams earned at-large berths to the tournament.

The tournament will take place in Texas with three of the venues being in San Antonio, one of the venues in San Marcos and another venue in Austin. The final will be played on April 4th in the Alamodome.

Every game during the tournament will be televised on ESPN, ESPN2, ABC or ESPNU.

With Ms. Boston's post presence, South Carolina leads the nation in blocks per game with 7.1 a contest and is fourth in the nation in rebounds per game.

In addition to the AP-All American selection, she is under consideration for three national player of the year awards. Ms. Boston is one of 15 players in the country on the 2021 Wooden Award Ballot. The finalists for the 2021 Wooden Award will be announced on March 26. She is a semifinalist for the Naismith Trophy and on the most recent watchlist for the Wade Trophy.

Additionally, she is a semifinalist for Naismith Defensive Player of the Year and is top five in the Lisa Leslie Award, which Ms. Boston won last year. The Lisa Leslie Award is given to the best center in women's college basketball. Ms. Boston is one of the top players in her conference and is the SEC Co-Defensive Player of the Year and an All-SEC First-Team selection.

Ms. Boston became the only player to record multiple triple doubles at South Carolina when she had 16 points, 12 rebounds and 10 blocks in a win against Georgia in late January. Her first triple double of her collegiate career came in her first game after she had 12 points, 12 rebounds and 10 blocks against Alabama State. She is one of 13 players in women's college basketball to record a triple-double this season.

South Carolina won the SEC Postseason Championship during both of Ms. Boston's seasons for the Gamecocks.

The Gamecocks ended last season at No. 1 in the rankings but were unable to compete in the NCAA tournament to cement themselves as the national champions because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This season they will get that chance.

Ms. Boston has been a major part of the Gamecocks' success since she has arrived in Columbia, and was the Consensus National Freshman of the Year and SEC Defensive Player of the Year. This year, she was one of two unanimous selections on the Preseason AP All-American Team.