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Aliyah Boston's 23 Points, 18 Rebounds Lead South Carolina to National Championship Game After Defeating Louisville 72-59

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Aliyah Boston during Friday's game against Louisville. By. SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

Virgin Islander and National Player of the Year Aliyah Boston is heading to the NCAA National Championship game after South Carolina defeated Louisville 72-59 in the Final Four on Friday night. Boston recorded her 29th double-double of the season with 23 points and 18 rebounds.

South Carolina will play the winner between UConn and Stanford on Sunday at 8:00 p.m. on ESPN for a chance to win the national title.

Boston's performance was announced as the Capital One Rewarding Performance of the Game on ESPN.

South Carolina built an early 11-2 lead that included lay-ups on back-to-back possessions by Boston that forced Louisville to call a timeout with about five and half minutes left in the first quarter.

An ESPN graphic stated that five minutes into the first quarter, Boston had five rebounds while the Louisville team had just four rebounds.

At the end of the first quarter South Carolina led 17-10.

South Carolina scored the first two points of the second quarter but Louisville responded by scoring twelve straight points and took a 22-19 lead with just over six minutes to go in the second quarter.

A lay-up by Boston that stopped the Louisville scoring streak was followed by a three pointer by Destanni Henderson that was assisted by Boston on the next possession. Henderson's shot gave South Carolina a 24-22 lead with just under five and a half minutes to go in the first half.

Louisville tied the game at 24 with four and half minutes left in the second quarter. South Carolina outscored Louisville 10-4 during the remainder of the first half and led 34-28 at halftime.

At halftime, Boston was asked by ESPN how South Carolina responded to Louisville's 12-0 scoring run in the second quarter. "We know basketball is a game of runs... They went on theirs and now we need to come back and go on ours'."

Boston had 8 points, 8 rebounds and 4 assists in the first half.

Zia Cooke scored the first five points of the second half to give South Carolina a 39-28 lead.

After Boston recorded her 10th rebound of the game she was fouled and hit two free throws which gave her 10 points. The made free throws gave South Carolina a 46-32 lead with just over seven minutes left in the third quarter.

Louisville trimmed the difference between the teams to 10 with 6:40 left in the third quarter before South Carolina rallied with 5 straight points to give them a 51-36 lead with just under six minutes left in the third quarter.

Louisville went on a 12-3 run which cut the deficit to six points before Boston scored a lay-up while being fouled. Boston made the free throw and gave South Carolina a 57-48 with 4 seconds left in the third quarter.

Louisville's Emily Engstler, who was the Cardinals leading scorer in the game, committed her fourth foul off the Boston lay-up at the end of the third quarter. Engstler fouled out of the game after she committed her fifth foul with just under five minutes left in the game. She finished with 18 points.

Boston made a three-pointer with just over three minutes left in the game that gave South Carolina a 68-54 lead.

South Carolina did not allow Louisville to make a three pointer in the game until there was less than a minute left to play in the fourth quarter.

After the game, Boston was interviewed by ESPN about how it feels to play in the national championship. "I'm just thanking God because we have one more game and we are not going home."

Boston won the Naismith Women's player of the Year and the Naismith Defensive Player of the Year on Wednesday.

Boston had an historic season and now holds the Southeastern Conference record for consecutive double-doubles after putting up at least 10 points and 10 rebounds in 27 games in a row this season. Her double-double streak is the fifth longest in the history of Division 1, according to ESPN.

Heading into the national semifinals, she averaged 16.8 points per game and 12.2 rebounds this season, which ranks her fifth in that rebounding category nationally.

In a Sports Illustrated article in February, Boston was heralded as the "Face of Women's College Basketball" and a "double-double machine."

Boston's 29th double-double ties the SEC Record for the second most double-doubles in a season.

South Carolina was the number one ranked team in both the AP and Coaches Poll for the entirety of the season and entered the game as the nation's third best scoring defense, giving up 50.5 points per game this season.

Boston was a major part of that defense's success as she led the team with 2.49 blocked shots per game, which was the 14th highest in that category this season in the country. Boston also averaged 1.3 steals per game and was tied with Destanni Henderson for the most steals per game on the team.

A sideline report before the game on ESPN mentioned Boston's Virgin Islands roots while highlighting the sacrifices her and her family made while Boston pursued her basketball dreams.

Boston left St. Thomas and moved to Massachusetts when she was 12 years old.

South Carolina beat Howard 79-21, Miami 49-33, North Carolina 69-61, and Creighton 80-50 in this year's NCAA Tournament to reach the national semifinals.