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All Eyes on Boston as NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament Begins Friday

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South Carolina coach Dawn Staley, left, talks with star forward Aliyah Boston, a native of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. By. AP.

As the South Carolina Gamecocks begin their championship defense journey with a match against 16th seeded Norfolk State University on Friday, the attention will be on USVI native Aliyah Boston, national player of the year who lit up the courts last year with her phenomenal gameplay.

Right before the Gamecocks beat the University of Connecticut Huskies in last year's NCAA final, Genno Auriemma, UConn coach said that Boston "might be the hardest person in America ... to guard."

Her record thus far supports Auriemma's statement. In her 2021-2022 season, Boston played an average of 27.5 minutes in each of the 37 games she started for the Gamecocks. She scored an average of 16.8 points each game, with 12.5 rebounds, indicative of her status as a "double-double machine", given to her in a Sports Illustrated article from February 2022 which also dubbed Ms. Boston the "Face of Women's College Basketball".

This season, she is averaging 13.3 points, 9.7 rebounds in just 25 minutes a game.

Ms. Boston's junior season saw her breaking the Southeastern Conference record with her 20th [consecutive double-double](#) in South Carolina's victory over Texas A&M. Their championship win over the Huskies was Boston's 30th double-double overall for the season.

The St. Thomas-born collegiate basketball star finished the season with a slew of awards, including being named Most Outstanding Player of the NCAA Tournament, the Naismith College Player of the Year, the Naismith Defensive Player of the Year, the US Basketball Writers Association Women's National Player of the year, and the Associated Press Women's College Basketball Player of the Year, among at least 17 awards and accolades for 2022 alone.

Ms. Boston's triumphant sophomore season culminated with accolades at home, with a [series of events](#) in the USVI, including a parade in her honor, held in June 2022.

This year, Ms. Boston finishes out her collegiate career with her senior tournament, she is already being heralded as one of the top two picks for the 2023 WNBA draft.