

March 5, 2015



Arkansas – 72
Ole Miss – 61

An interview with:

**COACH MATT INSELL
TIA FALERU
GRACIE FRIZZELL**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ole Miss head coach, along with players Tia Faleru and Gracie Frizzell.

Coach, if you could give us an opening statement.

COACH INSELL: I'm just real proud of our basketball team. We've had a great year. We didn't have it to start the second half for about eight minutes there. We didn't have a lot of pop. That's why I was having to call timeouts to try to get our pop right.

For where we were at to start the year, what a lot of people thought about us, to finish tied for seventh in the league, to do the things we've done this year, it's been a good year for Ole Miss. It's been a really good year for Ole Miss women's basketball. We are proud Rebels up here. We're not happy we lost. We win with class and we lose with class at Ole Miss.

I'm real proud of my basketball team. When the game was over, we talked in the locker room we're going to the NIT to win it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Could you speak to the challenges involved in rebuilding a basketball team with the tradition that Ole Miss has. Where do you think you are on the trajectory?

COACH INSELL: I thought it would take four years. Really, when I took over, where we were at, nobody in this room, nor did I playing in this league, knew what this kid's name was two years ago, Tia Faleru. Now she's a two-time

all-conference player, one of the best players to wear the uniform at Ole Miss. Real proud of her.

Our seniors bought in. I feel like we're way ahead of schedule. I thought it would take four years to get our depth right. We still struggle with depth with our bench, not because our kids on the bench aren't any good. I don't want that to get misconstrued. We have a lot of freshmen. We've had to sub with young kids. The future is bright for us.

We're way ahead of schedule. We have three really good players signed for next year. We signed one of the top three or four classes in the SEC. We have a kid transferring to us from Rutgers, real exciting to get her in there. We're going to add a couple more pieces.

It's real tough when you take over a program at the bottom of this league because this league is not forgiving night in and night out. We took over a program that finished last in the SEC for several years in a row. To get to the post-season in year two, to have a winning record, to have a chance to get 20 wins, now we're going to the NIT, there's a lot of great things going on in our program that I'm excited about.

I feel like we're on pace to get to where we want to get to faster than I thought we could get there. It's a credit to our administration. Ole Miss is committed to women's basketball. A lot of places it's not like that. Our attendance is growing.

There's so many great things going on. It all starts with how great our players are, the buy-in effect our players have. You have to have that. I act like a maniac on the back sidelines sometimes, but I tell them they can't do anything wrong in my eyes, and they don't.

We'll get better from this. We'll grow from this. We'll take a couple days off. In terms of our process, in terms of where we're going with our program, if you had a vote, you voted us 14th in the league. We were unanimous. We laughed at you guys then and we still laughing now. And the coaches voted us 14th. We still laugh at them, too.

Q. Girls, you started off pretty good offensively. What changed? Did they do anything offensively or defensively? Did you fall out of rhythm?

TIA FALERU: I feel like, yeah, we had Danielle in foul trouble, A'Queen, our two key players there. The energy kind of went down.

I feel like we beat ourselves the first half. We didn't come out and play Ole Miss basketball. When we play Ole Miss basketball, we have energy. At the start of the game, you see we played very well.

I feel that hurt us a little bit.

Q. What has this week been like for you returning back to Little Rock?

GRACIE FRIZZELL: I think it was good. I wish we would have won, obviously. Coming home, but it's still an away game.

My family is really my team, so...

Being home in Little Rock is good because my family and friends get to come out and support the Rebs, but I wish we would have won.

Q. Matt, what happened during the year that allowed you to jump from that projected last-place finish to seventh and turn some heads?

COACH INSELL: The buy-in effect from our players. It's fun to play at Ole Miss, but it's also tough on these ladies. We knew we had a lot of work we had to do.

It didn't just happen when the SEC play started. It was a process day one back in May when they reported to summer school. They bought into everything we're doing.

I hear coaches say all the time, they started playing my style of play. Our players grew up. They continued to grow as individuals, as people on and off the court. I'm just so proud of them. All credit goes to our players.

I told them before the season started, We're going to make the post-season. Everybody is going to say, What did you do to get to the post-season? I didn't do anything. These guys did that. They made that commitment. Their teammates made the commitment. When you get a team that makes commitments like that, you have a great season. I'm real proud of them.

Q. Coach, your dad is kind of a legendary women's college basketball coach. How much have you leaned on him as you've taken over at Ole Miss?

COACH INSELL: I've leaned on him a lot. I talked to him this morning. I didn't know if this game was at 12:00 or when it was going to be. Our girls were up early. Dad, what do I do if they push this game back to 2:00? Do I have them eat breakfast?

One thing he always taught me, whatever you do, go 100% at it. If you're players will buy into it, then something special will happen.

That's what's happened with us. I'm just real proud of 'em. When we win, we're real happy. We win with class. When we lose, we lose with class. That's another thing he's taught me, too, so...

Q. Coach, I was reading that a lot of the roads in northern Mississippi were closed yesterday and last night. How did y'all get up here?

COACH INSELL: We had a lot of rain. It was raining real hard. We left out Tuesday morning. We knew the weather was coming in so we got on up here Tuesday, brought the girls over here last night so they could see the tournament.

We got a lot of young players that never played in the SEC tournament. I wanted them to get the environment.

Our fans had trouble getting here. As I told you, our attendance is growing. I probably had 50, 60 different people call me this morning, Coach, we can't be there. Text messages on our phone, Sorry, I can't make it. Our athletic director couldn't even get over here. Luckily, our senior administrator, Lynnette Johnson, came with us. But our AD, he was flying over, he couldn't get out. So we had a lot of bad weather hit us.

I hate our fans weren't able to see us. But they watched at home and they're proud of this basketball team.

Q. Coach, what was the biggest difference between this game today and when you played Arkansas at the start of January?

COACH INSELL: They made more free throws than we shot. We're a team that drives to the basket every single possession. I have to go back and watch on film to see how that happened. It's kind of amazing to me. I guess we wasn't very physical. What do y'all think? We'll have to look at that on tape.

Free throws were a huge difference in the game, a huge difference in the game. It's just the

way it goes sometimes.

There was no difference. Arkansas is the same thing they were a month, two months ago. They haven't changed. We changed a lot. We got beat. Everything they did to us this time they did to us last time. We didn't get to the paint the way we needed to or the line. We only went to the line 17 times. That hurts us.

We'll have to go back and look at the tape. We'll look at it and learn from it because we're still playing. Last year at this time we weren't playing anymore, so there was nothing to learn. This time there's something to learn.

Q. What has the rebuilding process been like in the sense there is a post-season, an NIT to look forward to?

GRACIE FRIZZELL: It's been tough. We started in May, June, of last year. We're hungry for practice every day. We come to practice ready to work. I think coach does a really good job of helping us buy into it.

TIA FALERU: I feel like the staff, bringing in a whole new staff, strength and conditioning coach as well, long summers. Toughest summer since I've been here, and I'm a senior.

Been through ups and downs, so I know exactly what it's like to lose and what it's like to win. This year it's a little bittersweet. I'm a little down. Like coach said, we got more ball ahead of us. I feel like this is not the last time you're going to hear from Ole Miss.

Even though I'm going to be gone, I feel like we're going to make a run at NIT. As long as Tia Faleru is on the team, you're going to hear from Ole Miss.

COACH INSELL: We'll take another year or two from her. She's got so much more she can get better at. As I tell WNBA coaches that blow my phone up every day, she's going to be a great pro.

Gracie, being from Little Rock, I'm glad she's an Ole Miss Rebel. She's as good as there is. We have to get more Little Rock girls over to Ole Miss. I think that's going to happen, too.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, ladies, thank you very much.

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