

**March 6, 2015**



Kentucky – 76  
Mississippi State – 67

An interview with:

**COACH VIC SCHAEFER  
VICTORIA VIVIANS  
MARTHA ALWAL**

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Mississippi State head coach and student-athletes Martha Alwal and Victoria Vivians.

COACH SCHAEFER: Well, I'm disappointed. I think at about the 14-minute mark he called time-out, had some choice words down there. I thought his group really responded.

I thought they played harder, took us out of a lot of stuff offensively. Started with defense, which is that's where it starts for us, too. I thought they took us out of a lot of things because of how hard they were playing defensively.

Obviously we had a hard time guarding Epps. She probably was (indiscernible) best out of seven because she's had two really good ballgames against us. It's a team that has three great guards. They go 17 for 34 with their starting guards, and one of them went zero for three. Those three are hard to deal with. We really have a matchup issue with them when you play them obviously.

You have a lot of respect for O'Niell, Goss and Epps. I hate to put Tori on somebody that's going to give me too many issues because I don't need her chasing somebody around.

At the same time she's a freshman and still learning her way. Martha was five for five at half time. We got her two touches the second half. That's a key stat as well.

You have to give them credit. They're up there pressuring my point guard. We only had 12 turnovers tonight, y'all. That's about as few turnovers as we've had in a month. I'm proud of my team, so proud of my fans.

The Bulldogs traveled tonight. We had so many people in the stands. I'm so disheartened and disappointed for them. For those of you that don't follow us or don't know. We have been drawing tremendous rate. 7300 on Sunday and averaged almost five thousand fans a game in conference.

So proud of my fans for providing a great atmosphere for us tonight.

Got to take your hat off to Kentucky and Matthew and his staff. They played hard. I thought they upped the juice tonight midway through the second half and we didn't match it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Victoria, can you tell us what was wrong with your thumb and if you remember when that happened.**

VICTORIA VIVIANS: I don't know what happened to my thumb. I know my whole nail came off. It was just blood everywhere, so I had to get off the court. All right, though.

**Q. How big was that stretch when Victoria was on the bench?**

COACH SCHAEFER: We couldn't score. Obviously they were. I think Epps took the game over during that run.

What I'm disappointed about there, y'all, we talk about all the time making them use the screen. We allowed her to get to the rim so much and so often. She's such a big, physical guard, once she gets down there, she's got such great body control. She just can finish.

We didn't hedge on ball screens. We didn't hedge them properly. She's a great player. She made everything she looked at. Hey, I've seen it before about a month ago. It wasn't like anything we didn't know was coming.

It was just a tough stretch where we obviously were having a hard time at both ends. When we made our run, we were in passing lanes, we were doing what we do. We were taking the fight to them.

I'm sure that's what his conversation with them was about when he called time-out is we were taking a fight. They flipped it around on us. We were in passing lanes. Tori got a steal. J.J. got a couple steals. We were getting transition. We were doing some awfully good things.

But, again, I felt like those veterans, they got some veteran players, some great players, they just said, Hey, enough's enough. That's what you want out of some veteran kids. I thought they did that.

**Q. I know you're disappointed right now, but you know you still have a lot to play for going to the NCAA tournament. Talk about that. Also talk about Victoria.**

COACH SCHAEFER: Well, I'm certainly thrilled for my players and my staff and my university for being able to go to the NCAA tournament. To go 26-5 in year three. We, in most games, with two freshmen, two sophomores and a senior on the floor. We're a really young team. I'm going to miss this one right here whenever that day comes. She's been such a big part of our resurrection.

The ability for young kids to change, it's hard, it's hard for older people to change. Martha really has been a part of that. She's changed herself for the better.

Again, just thrilled. Again, we're the third seed by ourself in the SEC. I think that warrants a top four seed. I think we're one of the 16 best teams in the country. We've been ranked in the top 16 all year long. I know they don't look at that, but somebody needs to. There's not two groups of idiots out there. AP poll people and coaches. You got to respect those people that are voting and realize that we are.

We navigated the gauntlet in the SEC, gone 11-5. We're two free throws from being 13-3 in the league instead of 11-5.

I'm telling you, if we could host, I really believe there wouldn't be an empty seat. I just feel like we sell it out. We had 7300 on Sunday. Our fans are so infatuated and in love with our players, and rightfully so. Our kids play their hearts out. We just didn't play as well as Kentucky.

The ability to be in the NCAA tournament, I'm so happy for Martha. I promised this when I took the job. She's from Worthington, Minnesota, a long way away from home. Tough first year. I come in. I'm a little different than what she's used to. We had some heart to hearts on many a day and many a night. She stuck it out. I promised her

if she would, we'll get to the NCAA tournament. We're going to get there. It's going to be a great run.

I'm really happy for my players, obviously, and my staff. I know there's two parts to that. Did I hit both of them?

**Q. Talk about Victoria.**

COACH SCHAEFER: Obviously you're talking about a prolific scorer, just a kid that can get it done in a lot of different ways. You saw her come out tonight. I've seen her do that many, many times. It's nothing unusual. She's such a confident kid for being so young, inexperienced. She's so experienced in the game of basketball.

You put the freshman label on her, she doesn't play like one. Her high school coach, Chad, did a tremendous job with her. She's made so many big shots in her career, it's just another shot. It's just in a different arena at this level.

But she's made so many big shots in her career. You're looking at the all-time leading scorer in the history of girl's high school basketball. She's obviously been somebody we go to a lot. Made the game winner against A&M, scored 39 the last time we played this team.

She's meant a lot to us and, again, played well again tonight. Hey, I'm glad she's on my team and I don't have to figure out a way to guard her.

**Q. You played zone a little bit in the first half. Did you think about using zone a little bit more in the second half?**

COACH SCHAEFER: We tried to play zone. We just weren't very focused and into it. I mean, I had some senior guards out there kicking it around, not getting matched up right.

Really wanted to do that. Left them open. A couple times they made some wide-open threes. At this level, you're going to lose the horse game. Kids can make shots if they're unguarded.

That in essence is what happened. It happened in the first half, then again in the second half. Yeah, I wanted to play some zone, but you got to communicate. This has not been a team that communicates well on the floor. We'll go back in the locker room, back to the hotel, there will be a ton of communicating going on. On the floor they've struggled with communicating.

I tell you, we work on it every day. Three-on-two, two-on-one, it's all about communication. It's just been an Achilles all year.

Here is the other part. That was during the 30-to-four run. It's hard getting back in zone. When you're scoring, you can get back in it when you're not scoring, it's tough.

When we played them the first time, down 10 with 10 to go, went back to the matchup. We were scoring, getting stops, coming back, getting our defense set. Tonight, for whatever reason, we really lacked the focus, man or zone, we just really lacked focus defensively I thought. 76 points. Anybody that knows me knows that ain't my forté.

**Q. Victoria, how difficult was it to have the injury when you were kind of in the zone? How frustrating was that injury when it happened?**

VICTORIA VIVIANS: It was very frustrating. But I can't blame it. I got to play ball. Just got to come out there and play, play through whatever injury you have because it's the game, you got to win.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, ladies, thank you very much for joining us.

COACH SCHAEFER: Thank y'all. Praise the Lord and go Dogs.

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