

**March 6, 2015**



Tennessee – 75  
Georgia – 41

An interview with:

**COACH HOLLY WARLICK  
ARIEL MASSENGALE  
BASHAARA GRAVES**

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Tennessee head coach and student-athletes Ariel Massengale and Bashaara Graves.

COACH WARLICK: Just a great effort by our basketball team. We talked about just doing everything. This team, we want them to make a statement. We talk a lot about it. We talk a lot about playing in the moment and playing the game. We don't look ahead. We don't look behind us.

They do an unbelievable job of staying focused. They did a great job sticking to the game plan. Just really, really proud of them and what they did today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. Ariel, do you feel there's a comfort level when you get to this tournament maybe more so than during the regular season?**

ARIEL MASSENGALE: I think so. We had some freshmen, underclassmen who were a little nervous today. As upperclassmen, we stepped up from the beginning, showed them the way, showed them there was nothing to be nervous about.

Coach Warlick showed us before the game this is why what we've been working hard for, this is why we train, run on the track, (indiscernible) back on campus in the summertime to prepare for this moment.

**Q. Last year you had three come-from-behind wins. Do you feel like you almost got tonight off?**

COACH WARLICK: I feel a lot better. Last year, it was tough. But these young ladies battle.

Yet tonight, you know, I think we were focused. This team is extremely focused and we've got great leadership, we really do. I talk a lot about this. Our seniors have great leadership.

Bashaara has really stepped up and took up the slack for Isabelle. They police themselves. When they do that, hold each other accountable, it's fun to be around. You get to coach. Really that's what I've been doing, that's what we did tonight.

You know, Ariel makes calls. I totally trust her what she calls. She's a coach on the floor. I've been there. She sees things that I can't.

So just have a lot of confidence in them. They're in. They're all into this team and the program, so...

As I said, just proud of how they played tonight.

**Q. Girls, early on in the first half you got 11 straight defensive stops. Speak on how you were able to make a statement with defense, set the tone.**

ARIEL MASSENGALE: Well, it's something we pride ourselves on, something we worked a lot on this entire year.

So for me, myself, to do something about that, to be able to make that happen in the game, it's very comforting. Very rewarding to know that our hard work is paying off in practice.

COACH WARLICK: I love that. I'll comment on that. I love that. I didn't realize that. I'm glad you brought that stat. We have a drill that's called the persistence drill. It's extremely difficult. We don't get it too often. I think we've gotten it, I don't know, one or two times all year. It's just hard.

Love to hear that.

**Q. You struggled a little bit, giving up points in the paint the past few games.**

**Georgia had 12 tonight. Was that a focal point coming in?**

COACH WARLICK: It was. It was. I think Georgia does a great job of getting inside. We had three things we really wanted to focus on. That was transition points. I think they do a great job of getting to the basket, so we wanted to make sure we took away transition points.

Not putting them at the free-throw line. I thought yesterday they went 26 times. That was huge. We didn't want to put them at the free-throw line.

We didn't want them to have second-chance points.

Those are the things we talk about, that are points in the paint. We've been giving up a lot of points in the paint because of not rebounding and boxing out. We spent a lot of time on it this week, talked about it, emphasized it until they were probably sick of hearing about it. But it paid off. It paid off.

Our guards rebounded. We've been preaching about them to rebound, as well. We did the little things to help us win today.

**Q. You came out in that halfcourt trap and it really seemed to rattle Georgia early. A few quick turnovers. Momentum going right away.**

COACH WARLICK: Yeah, we were going to use it to kind of delay and disrupt. I thought we did.

Really I thought we didn't exert a whole lot. I didn't want to keep it going because I thought we would exert too much energy. But we moved, we talked. We were in the passing lanes. We did a great job with it.

It was working. We kept it on. It really separated us because it got us easy buckets to layups. Anytime you can score off your defense, that's huge for us.

**Q. Coach, you said in your opening remarks, you're here to make a statement. What kind of statement are you wanting to make?**

COACH WARLICK: You know, we hear a lot about we're not the one seed, we're the two seed. We don't really talk about any seeding.

When your star player goes down, they just kind of forget about you. These young ladies are so much a part of this team, and we talk about making statements.

I told them, Look, you won an SEC championship just as much as South Carolina did. We need to go out to continue to do what we need to do to win. Isabelle, huge loss for us.

We got some unbelievable talent and unbelievable basketball minds. I just want to make sure that these young ladies have the opportunity to show their skill, their love for this team and this program.

I tell them all the time, I wouldn't trade our team for anybody. Making a statement means that someone needs to fear to play against you, you play hard, you're relentless. That's the stuff we want to make sure that we know when we leave the floor, they say, That is a typical Tennessee team that laid it all out there. They went after loose balls. They played as hard as a team can play. May not always win, but we had a tremendous amount of effort.

**Q. Ariel, you hit the 500 assist plateau today. Cierra hit the thousand-point barrier. Talk about reaching those milestones together.**

ARIEL MASSENGALE: I think it's a great accomplishment for the both of us. You know, Cierra is the fourth person this year on our team to reach a thousand points. I think it's the first time it's been done in a while at the University of Tennessee. Just a credit to our coaching staff and teammates how hard we worked over these past four years. It's great to have our names in great company with other players.

**Q. How important is Jaime Nared to this team after Isabelle went down?**

COACH WARLICK: She's huge. Jaime, she's so quiet, she doesn't show a lot of emotion. But she has really come into her own. She does a lot of good things. She's a great passer. She can shoot the three. She's strong rebounding. She has a great pull-up jumper.

She's extremely quiet but is solid for us. She's had to be. She's had to be. I think she's becoming more confident in her defensive assignments.

I love what she's doing right now. Absolutely love it.

**Q. Bashaara, Holly talked about you trying to be more of a leader now. Are you conscious of trying to be more animated, expressive, more vocal?**

BASHAARA GRAVES: I've definitely been trying to be more vocal. I'm used to really staying in the background, just trying to get things done. Now I know I need to step up and be a leader.

COACH WARLICK: She hasn't gone anywhere. I love when Bashaara shows her emotion. She's our workhorse. She has really taken up the slack. She still played hard when Isabelle was here.

She demands the basketball. When you demand the basketball, the guards better get it to her. She wants the basketball. Tonight I thought she worked so hard. I mean, she was getting bumped and hit. She acted like it didn't even faze her. She's pretty tough.

**Q. Coach, that was the third meeting with Georgia this season. You could potentially meet Kentucky for a third time tomorrow. Do you prefer that or would you rather face a team like Mississippi State?**

COACH WARLICK: You know, it doesn't bother me really to meet a team three times. It's how you present it. We try to stay in the moment.

I always think we can play better. The two games we played Kentucky, I always think we can play better.

I think they're two similar-type teams. They're so athletic. They play very hard. They push the ball. They rely on their defense. I think they're two similar teams.

Either way, I mean, I'm excited we get the opportunity to play one of them. I think they're two similar teams. Maybe preparing for Kentucky may be easier than preparing for Mississippi State because we played them not too long ago.

It's going to be a fun game. It's going to be a battle. It will be fun to watch, especially if we win, it's really fun to watch.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

COACH WARLICK: Thank y'all.

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