

**March 7, 2015**



Tennessee – 75  
Kentucky – 64

An interview with:

**COACH MATTHEW MITCHELL  
JELLEAH SIDNEY  
BRIA GOSS**

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Kentucky head coach and student-athletes Jelleah Sidney and Bria Goss.

COACH MITCHELL: What a great basketball game. A lot of effort expended out there on the floor from both teams.

I thought Tennessee just played great. They have such talented players, well-coached, played so hard today.

I thought our players gave tremendous effort. We just couldn't get the ball in the basket. Tennessee made more shots than we did. It was just a terrific game to be a part of. I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of our team. The distance we traveled in the last 10 days as a basketball team is really amazing.

Proud of our seniors, just the way that they have really taken control of our team here down the stretch.

We will enter the NCAA tournament with very high hopes, very excited to get back and play in the NCAA tournament.

We wish Tennessee well and South Carolina well. It will be a great champion crowned here tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. It was a real physical ballgame tonight. Was that part of the game plan?**

COACH MITCHELL: Well, I thought at times the physicality of the game was disruptive to both teams. It was a very tough game out there today.

We wanted to be disruptive. We wanted to try to get disruptive with the pace. I thought Tennessee did a great job of controlling the pace of the game in the first half with their press. We just didn't handle that very well. That's on me. We didn't have the team prepared well enough to really attack the press. We will work hard to get better at that.

It was a very physical game.

**Q. Girls, you've come so close so many times. Talk about the emotion of getting so close since you all have been here.**

BRIA GOSS: It just really fuels the fire to get back in the gym. We still have a lot of basketball to play. We're going to look at the film, correct our mistakes, really focus on us and what we can do better to improve.

Yeah, like I said, we have a lot more basketball to play. So we'll try to keep our heads tie.

JELLEAH SIDNEY: To piggyback off of Bria, we'll go back to the gym. We have a lot of things to work on. Tonight wasn't our night. We had 20 offensive rebounds, we only scored nine points off of it. We need to go back to the gym so we can figure out what to do for the NCAA tournament.

**Q. Epps had 31 points last night, 10 points tonight. Obviously Tennessee tried to frustrate her. What were they able to do to take her out of the game? Also, Andraya Carter's defense, her being left off of the all-defensive team?**

COACH MITCHELL: The second part first. I think she's a fantastic player. She's a really, really good defender. I don't know how many you get on the defensive team. She's a really good defender. She doesn't need to be on the team for anybody to know it. Everybody can see her and watch her out there. She plays with intensity and hustle. I admire Andraya. I think she's a really good player and plays hard, plays

the way you'd like to see a player play.

I thought we didn't help Makayla very much in the first half against the press. The halfcourt trap really slowed us down. Again, that's on me. We didn't have them ready to attack that. That's not Makayla's fault, but mine. We'll try to get better at that.

**Q. Girls, how did you feel like your start was defensively? Do you feel you could have taken bigger advantage of that on the offensive end?**

BRIA GOSS: Definitely. We focus on our defense to get our offense going. We kind of eased into this one. Tennessee made us pay.

I think coming out, getting the first five points was good, but we didn't let that carry out for the next minutes.

**Q. Coach, with Epps, she's obviously a scoring point guard. Where do you find the balance with her setting up her teammates or attacking one-on-one like she was doing last night?**

COACH MITCHELL: She has a really good feel for the game. She has a lot of games with high assist numbers. She's very productive in that. Just a real versatile player.

She finds the balance. She's high IQ basketball-wise. I just always try to talk to her about what plays are necessary to win that particular game. Is it scoring? Is it setting your teammates up?

I think she's come a long way and learned a lot from this tournament. She had to play a lot of minutes, had to fight through three games in three days. I think it will make her a better player.

**Q. Could you talk about not being able to put the ball in the basket tonight. Was that something Tennessee was doing or really was something that wasn't happening with you guys?**

COACH MITCHELL: My perspective from the sideline, I think Tennessee played really tough defense around the rim tonight. There's no doubt about that.

I think those things sometimes it looks like it gets a little contagious, people get frustrated. After you've missed so many, people maybe start rushing a little bit. There's a lack of poise is really what I saw out there.

I thought our turnovers in the first half, we were lifting our pivot foot. I thought that was a lack

of poise. We had a lot of fall-aways because Tennessee is athletic and big. In a tough game like this, you have to hang in there and be tough, find the rim, put the ball in the basket.

We missed a lot of layups tonight. We counted 18. If you could make half of those, you're in really good shape. It's a game that falls in your favor. They didn't go in.

JELLEAH SIDNEY: Tennessee is a great team. They play great defense. I think we were rushing a little too much. When we go back in the gym, we're going to work on that.

**Q. Coach, you've beaten Mississippi State this year. You've beaten South Carolina. This was your third loss to Tennessee. What is it about the matchup with this particular Tennessee team that's been so tough for y'all this year?**

COACH MITCHELL: Well, it's been three good games. They've just found a way to make more buckets than us. It's a very, very well-coached team. Very prepared. They play real hard. Just really admire how hard they play. They play together.

They're just a tough team. We had a chance all three times and just weren't able to beat them this particular year. But we will get back in the saddle next year and see what we can do.

They're a really good team. I admired how hard they played today. We wish them the best tomorrow, as we do South Carolina. It will be a great champion crowned tomorrow.

**Q. Matthew, you have almost two weeks to wait to find out what happens. If you were on the committee, you probably earned the right to host by now, do you think you've done that? What seed do you think you've earned considering your varied résumé?**

COACH MITCHELL: Thank you for asking that question. That's a great question.

I don't know how in the world we would be anything higher than a three seed. I don't see any indicator, strength of schedule, RPI, quality wins, I don't see anything that has us outside of the top 12. So I would say a three seed.

I don't know. I'm probably the least versed and the least knowledgeable about how it all happens. That's just my opinion of the little that I've looked at it.

I won't worry a whole lot about it. I would

definitely think we're one of the top 17 teams. I think we'll probably host, I would think. But I don't know what else to tell you.

We played a very difficult schedule. All schedules are not created equal in the Southeastern Conference. We didn't have one of the easier ones this year. We had a real tough one. We had a tough non-conference schedule. We did all the things you're asked to do to have a tough one.

I think we were a two at one time behind Tennessee. If they're looking for a team that's tough and has had to play tough, has answered the bell, had some great wins, that's us.

We'll look forward to getting selected to the tournament. I would say for us right now, those of you who follow us know it's been a very, very emotionally draining and physically draining last 10 days after the Ole Miss loss. The transformation in our team has been amazing. I'm so proud to coach 'em.

If there was a team that ever needed a couple days off to rest and really get refreshed and get their spirits lifted, it's our team. I think we'll really, really benefit from some rest.

I just look so forward to coaching this team in the NCAA tournament. It will be a lot of fun. They're a great, great group of young people. They've so impressed me with how hard they've worked in the last 10 days.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH MITCHELL: Thank you.

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