

March 7, 2015



Tennessee – 75
Kentucky – 64

An interview with:

**COACH HOLLY WARLICK
CIERRA BURDICK
JORDAN REYNOLDS**

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Tennessee head coach and student-athletes Jordan Reynolds and Cierra Burdick.

COACH WARLICK: It was a fun game for us. They stuck to our scouting report and what we needed to do. We didn't start off real good, but we stayed focused.

This group, I keep saying they play so well together, we don't have to rely on one person. They're truly a team. They're fun to be around. When you win like this, we heard a lot about beating a team three times, we talked a lot about that. It's about playing in the moment.

I think this is what this group does. They play in the moment. We know the two games that we played earlier, we could have gotten better. We just did some really good things as a team.

Excited to move on to the championship game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Cierra, you had your fingerprints all over this game, playing with a swag this year. What changed for you particularly with your mental game?

CIERRA BURDICK: Just trying to be confident. Yesterday I didn't shoot the ball well. I knew I needed to have a bounce-back game today.

I think in previous years and games, if I didn't have a good shooting night, you know, a previous game, I would let that affect my next game.

I think I'm just trying to mature on and off the basketball court. I think that's helped me. My teammates and coaches have done a great job of keeping me confident, telling me to continue to shoot the ball.

Obviously with Isabelle going out, that's like a sister to me. It's hard for me to see a sister go out. I think I'm playing with a chip on my shoulder.

Q. How proud are you of this group to get back to this point and have the opportunity tomorrow to showcase yourself on a national stage?

COACH WARLICK: This team understands and respects Isabelle's talent. She's been our All-American. But I think you see the talent that we have.

We've never at Tennessee built a program around one person. We say that in recruiting. So this instance right here has facts that we don't do that.

These young ladies, we've got a great group. We've got a lot of All-Americans. It's difficult. Cierra didn't play a lot as a freshman. Jordan didn't play a lot as a freshman until Ariel got hurt.

They step up, they do what they've always done, they compete. They're very talented. As Cierra said, Isabelle is still so much a part of our team. We take really offense to this team is not going anywhere without Isabelle.

So it's up to these young ladies to fight and scrap and claw. That's what they're doing. They're competing. That's all we ask them to do, just compete, play every possession like it's your last possession.

Q. Jordan, it looked like Kentucky more so than any team since you lost Isabelle really was determined to take Bashaara away inside, take away the post play. You countered by hitting three-pointers. Can you talk about that.

JORDAN REYNOLDS: Well, our coaches

really harp on playing inside-out. So when we get the ball inside, you know, people tend to triple-, quadruple-team Bashaara and Cierra on the inside. When we when we play inside-out it allows us to get open shots as we did today, and we knocked them down.

Q. I think the game in Columbia was one of the best games in the nation this season. Here are the top two teams playing for a championship. Can you reflect on that game.

COACH WARLICK: I thought we played hard, we played smart, but we didn't finish with a box out.

I just feel South Carolina, it's not the first shot that's going to get you, it's the second, third and fourth attempt.

I thought for the most part we took care of the ball there, we just didn't box out. We attacked. We got good looks.

I think they understand it. They get it. They watched it. We keep preaching it. That's the key to us. Don't give 'em transition points, and box out.

Q. Coach, Dawn Staley said this afternoon that she's got the best bench in the country. Obviously their depth has been a weapon for them this year. You've gotten some good minutes for your bench the last two games. How comfortable are you going to your bench tomorrow, particularly with Nia Moore?

COACH WARLICK: We're going to have to go to our bench. That game, the flow was so different, we had five or six people that were really playing well together. I didn't see an opportunity to Nia in. It wasn't anything she didn't do. We're going to need her tomorrow.

I think our bench, we're young. But they contributed tonight. They got great minutes tonight. They were part of the team. We needed them to play.

We're going to need them tomorrow, so...

I think Jaime Nared is playing a lot better. She played well in Columbia, as well. We're going to need our bench.

Q. Girls, obviously you would like to be in the final against anybody. The fact that it is South Carolina, have you been wanting to get another chance at them? Does that make it more exciting or satisfying?

CIERRA BURDICK: I think anytime you lose to a team, you want another shot at them, at

least if you're a decent competitor. You want to prove yourselves against them.

We wanted it. We asked for it. Now we're getting what we asked for.

We have to prepare tonight, recover, get our rest, then we have to come in for another war.

It's going to be a fun basketball game. When we were in Columbia, it was great basketball. I'm looking forward to tomorrow's matchup.

Q. Cierra, even though you lost that game in South Carolina, did you come away from it feeling confident about a rematch?

CIERRA BURDICK: I definitely did. We did some really good things. We just didn't finish like Coach Holly said. We didn't finish with a box out. That's important. We learned from it. We'll definitely continue to harp on that, making sure we limit their second and third chance opportunities, limiting their transition, limiting their inside game. I think if we do that, we'll be in business.

Q. You've been involved in almost every SEC tournament. Maybe one stretch in Nebraska you weren't. Tennessee is going for its 18th. Talk about what it means for a program that has had so much success in the NCAA tournament putting emphasis on having success in the SEC?

COACH WARLICK: I think it started when I was a player. The SEC tournament was so valuable to us and important. I think Pat always stressed the idea of winning your conference, winning the tournament. We take a lot of pride in it.

It's always, always a part of our goal to win an SEC championship. So instilled in these young ladies. We preach it. We go in and practice and we see those banners every day. I don't think there's one kid in our program that's been in our program that hasn't gotten an SEC ring.

We think it's the best conference in the country. It's the most competitive. This tournament is so hard. At times it's harder than the NCAA tournament because you have to play back-to-back. It tests how good of shape you're in, what your mental game is all about. That's why we love it. We want to compete in it. We take a lot of pride in getting to this game tomorrow.

Q. Coach, Makayla had 31 points last

night. You limited her to 10 points tonight. Talk about the game plan, particularly the defense of Andraya Carter.

COACH WARLICK: We knew we were going to do it by committee. We have a lot of respect for Makayla Epps. Especially watching what she did last night. We tried to limit her touches. We had different people on her. We switched. We attacked her.

We wanted to make sure that she worked for every shot she got. Let's face it, Kentucky, this is their third game. Their style is playing up and down and playing hard. They didn't back away from that those three games.

I think the fatigue factor came into it a little bit. We knew it would. We wanted to attack them.

I thought Andraya, she's our defensive stopper. When she plays well and does the things we need her to do, we're in business.

I thought Jordan did some good things, as well. She's becoming a really - I hate to say it in front of her - but she's becoming a good, solid defender as well. All of us, because we're learning to play angles and keep them in front of us.

We don't have to be great at defense, we just got to be solid and good. I think this team understands that. We've really, really worked at it.

I think you're seeing the results.

Q. You mentioned the slow start. It was a really slow start at the beginning.

COACH WARLICK: Yes.

Q. Looked like a baseball score for a while. You said this team doesn't get rattled at all. Expand on that a little bit.

COACH WARLICK: I was worried about our fans really. They stood up for an awful long time.

I thought we were getting good looks. I would be kind of nervous about it. I thought we were getting good looks. The shot didn't go.

This group has had to learn your offense should not affect your defense. The beginning of the season, if Cierra or Jordan would have missed two or three shots, we got our head down, we're in trouble.

But I think they understand that now defense can come back and get them easy buckets. I thought we were getting good looks. They just weren't going down early.

Bashaara scored our first point on a free throw, so...

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

COACH WARLICK: All right. Thank you.

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