

THE MODERATOR: We are pleased to be joined by Mississippi State.

Coach, your thoughts on your win over Tennessee.

COACH SCHAEFER: God is good. Man, what a day. Blessed us with a great, great team in Mississippi State. Great group of kids. Tough. Just tough, hard-nosed. Competitive fire, competitive spirit. They're just a pleasure to coach.

I couldn't be prouder today to be the head coach of Mississippi State and prouder of these kids. These kids deserve all the credit. We beat a heck of a basketball team today. Holly has done a great job with that group.

I'm extremely proud of my girls. They wouldn't be denied, played their hearts out, competed every possession. Gave up 20 offensive rebounds, and it seemed like 50. First half we did a really good job. I knew that would be a big key.

But Dom competed with DeShields all night and really did a good job. She was 8-20, four turnovers. I felt like she was really competitive.

When Victoria got hot, you start pulling out your play card, you start trying to find everything you can run to get her a shot or a look. They were guarding her extremely hard on the halfcourt. But we were getting her some stuff in transition.

Our kids were really setting some good stuff for her. But it all starts on the defensive end. We can't get that going in transition without defending.

I thought we were outstanding defensively. They shot 28%, 20% in the fourth quarter when the game's on the line. Again, just could not be prouder of our kids and our basketball team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I know it's difficult to compare games. Is this the toughest 40 minutes your kids have played?

COACH SCHAEFER: Well, I'd say it's certainly 1-2. We had a knock down, drag out with South Carolina. That was a two-point game with 53 seconds left, they made a great play, scored, we fouled them for the last two. That was a knock down, drag out. Really physical, tough, competitive game.

I'd have to say today ranks up there certainly top two or three. Probably the toughest that we came out on top with a victory.

Tennessee is really talented. I mean, they're really talented. They figured it out. They're playing hard. They're guarding.

Chinwe for us did a tremendous job. Really got after them on the boards. Had 11 rebounds. Tori had nine. That's the thing that Tori brings to the table. She may not score every night and get 30, but tonight she gets 30 and 9, 9 rebounds. One she got was a stick-back.

Certainly obviously was a very hard-fought basketball game.

Q. Victoria, when you go on runs like that, did you tell yourself at halftime that you were going to have to do something to take the team on your shoulders or did things just evolve that way?

VICTORIA VIVIAN: Everything just happened that way. Like coach said, we got to come out and throw the first punch and keep fighting. Whatever happens happens.

The team came out. We played hard. I started knocking down shots. I guess it kept going from there.

Q. Coach, obviously your program went through some growing pains when you first got there. What did you feel it took to change the culture of Mississippi State basketball to get to where it's consistently having success now?

COACH SCHAEFER: Well, it took players. I mean, we had to go recruit that first recruiting class before anybody saw us play. That first year wasn't good. We were 13-17. We knew we had to sign some kids early before they ever saw us play.

Again, before I could even take the job, I had to know I could hire the staff. I got an unbelievable staff. I got the best staff in the country, in my opinion. I had to be able to get the staff and my AD, Scott Stricklin, gave me the means to do that.

Look, I knew what it looked like. I built them before. I knew what 13-17 looked like. We didn't panic. Then that next class had Victoria in it. That's a difference player. That's a kid that can go make plays. We had to have her. She's one hour 15 minutes from the house. We had to close the fences around the state and make sure we didn't let anybody like her get out.

When we first got there, not many people in the stands. We averaged 6100, 6200 this year for SEC games, over five thousand of the regular season. I couldn't be prouder of that.

The key to that is my players, my team, how they play the game, how they honor the game with how they play it. We don't stand around in 2-3 zones and hope they miss defense. You can tell. We're guarding. Dominique has taken almost 50 charges, Morgan has taken 40-something. We're an exciting team to watch.

People talk to me all the time about the marketing. We have a marketing group, they do a good job. But to me the best marketing plan I got is the players. I call them the peoples' teams. We go up in the stands, hug mamas, kiss babies. Shake hands, take pictures. It's the same people that want to get the same autograph, same picture taken.

My kids are just so good in that role. They're accessible. I really think it's built a culture. It's the thing to do now, to go watch a women's basketball game. I think that's a big part of it, how we play the game.

Q. Victoria, in that run to start the third quarter, four of the shots you hit were jump shots. In the fourth quarter you changed it up, took the ball to the basket. I don't know if you heard Coach Schaefer in the back of your head. Looked like you changed your mentality, attacking, going one-on-one. Talk about the difference between the third quarter and then the fourth quarter.

VICTORIA VIVIAN: It was definitely a different shot. Whatever plays we're going to run, I'm going to take the shot that's supposed to be taken at the time.

Q. Victoria, how much of what you did early was you trying to make amends a little bit for the last two games?

VICTORIA VIVIAN: I was just trying to play basketball. If the shots fall, they fall. If they don't, they don't. Trying to help my team any way they can.

COACH SCHAEFER: When her shots aren't falling, she rebounds. She took a charge tonight. I'm awfully proud of her for that.

Q. Dominique, between you and Morgan, which of the two of you have the most bruises?

DOMINIQUE DILLINGHAM: I think we're both kind of equally matched in the bruise department. But me and Mo, I think we're the catalyst of the team. Sometimes Tori, obviously. Like you say, every day it starts on the ball. If your point guard is playing good defense on the ball, everybody behind you is going to play good defense.

I think it starts with Morgan and then it ignites through the team, so...

Q. Dom, talk about defensively, there was a stretch late, fans rose, you sat them down, the fans rose, you sat them down. You were overcoming a sea of orange. Talk about the team's defense.

DOMINIQUE DILLINGHAM: Coach said, Over and not bite you. I think we really focused on that tonight, kept them in front of us. I think we really did good.

They obviously had a lot of fans tonight. I think our fans were even louder tonight when we did good things. Our fans were incredible tonight and they were behind us the whole game.

Q. Victoria, coach talked earlier about closing the fences around you when he was recruiting you. Can you give me another school or two that recruited you hard and that you thought about going to?

VICTORIA VIVIAN: I kind of knew I wanted to go to Mississippi State the whole time because I'm a family person. I just egged it on until it was time for me to sign.

Q. Victoria, watching you go up in the stands after the game, looked like they tried like hell to get you to dance. You never broke it down. Why not?

VICTORIA VIVIAN: Because I know we won, but we have another game to be excited for tomorrow.

Q. Will you dance tomorrow?

VICTORIA VIVIAN: If we win -- well, when we win, either way.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH SCHAEFER: Praise the Lord and go Dogs.