

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 2, 2018

Robin Pingeton Jordan Frericks Amber Smith Missouri Tigers

Missouri - 59, Ole Miss - 50

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Missouri head coach, Robin Pingeton, and student-athletes Amber Smith and Jordan Frericks. Coach, your opening thoughts on the tonight's victory the first win in SEC tournament history for the Missouri Tigers?

ROBIN PINGETON: First of all, thanks for coming out. We appreciate you guys covering this tournament. Hats off to Matt Insell and his team I thought they competed hard tonight. That's hard to do back-to-back games, but they did a great job and Matt is doing a great job. Happy for our players. This is a big win for us. We didn't focus on the fact that we hadn't won an opening game in the SEC since we've been in there, but we wanted to stay true to ourselves and be the best version of ourselves that we could be and hopefully everything would take care of itself. Proud of our girls. I thought it was a physical game both ways and that first game is always tough and nice to get under your belt.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes?

Q. Amber, led the team in points, rebounds and assists tonight. Spent a lot of time diving for loose balls. What was it like for you to play as well as you did tonight?

AMBER SMITH: I credit my teammates and my coaches for putting me in great positions for the ball and just outworking the other team. Coach always tells us that 50/50 balls are always ours 100% of the time, so we need to get on the floor and get loose balls. And also being able to get in that screen action that caused me to get open.

Q. Jordan, when you think about where this team has come from over your time here, and I know this isn't the end all, be all goal, but to win one here at



this tournament, what does it mean to you guys?

JORDAN FRERICKS: Yeah, the SEC is competitive and we wanted to come in and make a long run. Ole Miss was our first opportunity and I think it's very special to see where our team was and where it is now. We're going to look forward to keep rolling with all this and it's just a special team. Just really excited for the next game.

Q. Amber and Jordan, what did Ole Miss do to take away your offense tonight?

AMBER SMITH: They extended pressure a little more, so tried to get up in us early in the shot clock and leave us on and below seconds. So we had to get a quick shot but they just pushed us out and pressed us more.

JORDAN FRERICKS: They had just ball screening action on our guards and seeing the movement and getting the ball passed around we could find the open person.

Q. Did it seem like that Auburn game in terms of the number of turnovers and how y'all were turning over the ball?

JORDAN FRERICKS: I don't remember the Auburn game, so I couldn't tell you. I'm sorry.

ROBIN PINGETON: I think this is a handful of teams in the SEC that just play, you know, just really aggressive. They're very athletic. They try and speed you up. I think at times the game feels like it's going quicker than what it really is. That's something that Ole Miss I think is really good at, so I think there are some similarities in the styles.

You've gotta give them credit. I felt like we had some, I don't know, first-game soft turnovers. We've got to be better than that, but I think you've got to give Ole Miss a lot of credit. I thought they really came after us and played aggressive for forty minutes.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you. We will now take questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, do you have any thoughts on Amber's night tonight stepping up when Sophie and Cierra and Jordan kinda got -- had trouble getting going?

ROBIN PINGETON: Just really proud of her. Somebody asked me going into this tournament just

who I thought was really going to have to have big games for us and I just said I think Amber has always been our X-factor. She does so many things so well and she is similar to Sophie where she is a hard guard, can shoot the three, loves playing with her back to the basket. I think she rebounds well. Defensively she is not afraid to get on the floor for loose balls. She has had a great sophomore season for us. I'm really proud of her. I'm not surprised, but I'm really proud of her.

and a half minutes is a lot, but when it's a physical game and it all adds up. So it was a combination of trying to give them opportunity and trying to maximize an opportunity for our kids not to have extended minutes tap point. It looked like we were pretty secure in playing tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. We will see you tomorrow.

Q. I don't think Sophie took a shot in the first half. What did Ole Miss do to limit her early on and what kind of change in the second half?

ROBIN PINGETON: I think she had one reverse layup in the first half. But I think Sophie is such an unselfish player, and I think, you know, Sophie every night she can draw a lot of attention. She didn't have a lot of opportunities in that first half, but I think in the second half, you know, we ran her off some screens to try and free her up a little bit, get the ball in her hands. Typically when the ball is in her hands good things are going to happen for us. But she was patient, and as usual Sophie is such an unselfish player and she doesn't take a lot of forced shots.

Q. Coach, you faced Georgia earlier this year and it didn't go the way y'all wanted, but what can you take from that game and moving forward to tomorrow?

ROBIN PINGETON: I haven't thought a lot about Georgia yet. I knew this was going to be a challenge tonight. We felt like when we played at Georgia they just kinda came out and punched us in the mouth and even though it was a 1-point game going into the fourth quarter it felt like we were down 20 the entire time. Again, I think we're going to see a team that's going to try to speed us up and applies a lot of pressure and we're going to have to do a great job taking care of the ball against a very good defensive team.

I think it will be similar as it was tonight and I think against a team like Georgia you have 24 turnovers, you don't have a shot in heck at winning.

Q. Coach, 2:30 left in the game you took out the starters and moved in the bench guys. They struggled a little bit, but you stuck with them. What does that mean for their confidence?

ROBIN PINGETON: I say this all the time, I think we have to trust those kids and they've earned the right. It's a big stage and it's an opportunity and I think that's how you grow as a player. It was getting close, if it got much closer I was going to sub some rotations back in. But I really want to put 'em out there in those situations and I think anytime, you know, it was a physical game you don't want a starter to get injured. So I think just the extra wear and tear on the legs you don't think two