

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 2, 2018

Matt Insell

Alissa Alston

Madinah Muhammad

Ole Miss Rebels

Missouri - 59, Ole Miss - 50

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Ole Miss head coach Matt Insell along with Alissa Alston and Madinah Muhammad. Coach your opening thoughts?

MATT INSELL: Before I talk about Missouri, I'm real, real proud of our ladies and obviously our season didn't go the way we wanted it to go. We had a lot go against us, a lot go wrong this year and this is not the way we wanted to end it with this record. But in my book our kids are winners to me. They fought every single day tooth and nail to get better. I saw a lot of players grow up here at this tournament and get better.

It's good to have a roster that's that young and everybody is going to be returning and get some kids off injuries and add a couple more and we have a chance to do something special as we move forward. Hats off to Missouri. Again, I thought we played really, really well defensively. We couldn't get shots to go in particular in that third quarter. When you're playing against a team that's ranked in the top 10, 15 in the country and you go through the spell we went through there in the third quarter where we go 2 of 17 that's the difference in the game. That's where the game is won and lost right there. But our kids never gave up, they kept fighting to the better end and I'm real proud of them for that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes?

Q. Ladies, if you'll talk each of you about tonight's game. What was Missouri doing that caused you to struggle offensively until the final quarter?

ALISSA ALSTON: I really feel like a team as a whole we just be couldn't get shots to fall. I felt like we played hard. Missouri, hats off to them. They had a good game.



Q. Madinah?

MADINAH MUHAMMAD: Like Alissa said, all credit to Missouri. They're a good defensive team. We got every shot we wanted to get. We just didn't knock 'em down, but they played a good game.

Q. Does it cause you to make it more difficult when you're playing back-to-back days when that is something you haven't done since the beginning of the season?

ALISSA ALSTON: Our program relies on toughness and we relied on that to carry us over to the next game.

MADINAH MUHAMMAD: We are Ole Miss. We gotta keep on fighting. We looked at it like it was our last game and we played as hard as we could.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you.

Q. Coach, back-to-back days, you have a couple of low point performances of the year. Was fatigue a factor coming into the stretch?

MATT INSELL: No, I don't think it was fatigue. I thought our kids continued to fight. I thought they had a lot of great toughness about 'em.

We have had a lot of adversity and I don't think anybody at any point anybody that's played us knows our players are not going to give in, they're going to keep pushing forward. That's why we preach toughness in our program and it's not for everybody but it is for these kids and those two sitting beside me. They wanted to win and they felt like they could win this tournament and they played like that. If we could have got a shot to go in in the third quarter, I think things could have changed and been different. All due respect, Missouri is a tough, tough defensive team.

Robin does a tremendous job her and I get along really, really well and I watch her team quite a bit and I said it before the season started that I think she has a team that could win this league. And I still believe she can win this tournament. She has got a team that if they get going they can beat anybody. They are a tough defensive team and a very good offensive team. I was very proud of Chyna Nixon. She held one of the best players in the country to five attempts in Sophie Cunningham. That's a freshman guarding one of the best players in the country. She grew up right there. I

was proud of her for that.

Q. 20 turnovers, and getting 13 points off of them, is that an encouraging building block for this team? You mentioned the young roster going into next year?

MATT INSELL: I think 24 turnovers is impressive but you want to score a point per turnover, so you want 24 points. That means you scored on half of them. We didn't convert 'em the way we wanted to, but defensively we have been preaching that all season long, getting better defensively and I was starting to see that over the last week, even though the scoreboard wasn't showing it.

When we got here and we locked up and played great defense. We played great defense tonight against Missouri, a team that just had their way with us, and Oxford earlier this season. We played great defense against Florida, a team that has scored 70, 80 points on us every time they played us. And I thought we were are really, really locked in defensively in both games and I finally saw what we've been wanting to see. True credit to our players to continue to push forward and focus on the fundamentals and the things we're getting better at. We got beat 52-24 on the boards against them the first time we played 'em, today they beat us 37-31 and they only had 4 offensive rebounds. We missed enough shots for them to get more rebounds. But the 4 offensive rebounds were encouraging and our players were attacking the glass and did a great job of rebounding the ball. They're winners in my book. I don't care what anybody else says. They're winners to me.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Appreciate it.