

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Mississippi State Bulldogs

Doug Novak

Myah Taylor

Postgame Press Conference



Kentucky 83, Mississippi State 67

Q. Myah, a couple of days ago you posted on social media your support of Doug. I'm not sure if you saw, but there were fans in the stands holding "We want Doug" signs. What is it about the job that Doug has done that makes you so confident that he should be the next full-time head coach at Mississippi State?

MYAH TAYLOR: Those signs were pretty amazing. When I saw them I laughed and smiled. He clearly knows -- he clearly knows the X's and O's, ins and outs, which is definitely one of his strengths, but I just think that his confidence in us just only having seven players and what he has been able to do with this program and with those seven players is amazing.

The development of Charlie, I don't know if you guys have kept up with Charlie, but just her development over this year alone over the last five games alone has just been incredible for us. And then just he is just a great guy, great family guy. I have grown really close with him and his family as well and his youngest daughter, Gracie. I fully support Coach Doug. Yeah.

Q. Along the same lines, do you feel like the social media posting and the team's endorsement, does that do something with the powers at be? Does it have an impression on them?

MYAH TAYLOR: Yes, sir, I definitely think so. The team is behind him. Not only us, but the fans are behind him, the community of Starkville is behind him. And just we have some amazing fans and just their encouraging words, just about us and about Coach Doug on social media really just gives us that extra fire and we just kind of use that, but I

definitely think so.

Q. Can you talk about the game? In particular strong start and was it the seven players that kind of took a toll throughout the course of the game?

MYAH TAYLOR: I think it's -- it's not a secret that we have seven players. I think everybody knows, and I think a lot of people know that fatigue can factor into that a little bit, but we're not going to use that as an excuse. Kentucky went out and did an amazing job. They executed really well, whether it was through Rhyne or the other players that stepped up big-time for them.

I think we battled. That's the biggest thing. We battled to the last second until the clock went off. So I'm really proud of my team. I'm proud of what we've been able to do over the years, and just kudos to them.

Q. Doug, obviously, Myah and a lot of your team has shown support for you being the full-time head coach. Just, I guess, a two-parter here: Given everything this team has gone through this year, how have you managed to keep things together with this team, and do you feel like you have done whatever you needed to do to be the next full-time coach at Mississippi State?

DOUG NOVAK: It's kind of an awkward topic, to be honest with you, but I would probably rather talk about that one than the game just because of how that game went and Kentucky played so well, and we hung in there as long as we could.

In terms of your question, I never set out to get this job. All I tried to do is have great practices, grow players, keep this program afloat, and we did, and we did more than that. We did with seven players and sometimes only six players. We gave some really good teams in this league a scare, and we didn't back down from anybody. So that was my number one goal was to do that, and then whatever happens, I really have no control over it.

I'm not on social media, so I don't really know, but I'm not dumb either. I hear it. I feel it. The town of Starkville, I love it. It's a natural fit for me, but it's really not my choice.



I love coaching here. I loved coaching those seven girls, women. We'll just see how it goes moving forward.

Q. Doug, with your team's quickness, you guys have been able to get all the way to the rim a lot of the time with dribble penetration. Tonight it seemed like they kind of limited that. You still got in the lane, but they made you shoot that in-between shot a lot of the time. Do you attribute some of that just to their length, their athleticism?

DOUG NOVAK: Definitely. Sometimes against those longer teams, which is about everybody in the SEC, by the way, you can't do it right away, and so you might have to dribble underneath the net. You might have to delay it a little bit for that gap to really open up just because we can't get that first one off. It's five-six across the board, and, yeah, it makes it tough because we're getting shots blocked. We're probably not doing the right thing; need to be kicking that ball out or second-cutting it.

But they have really quick guards. They have good length at every position. I thought early we were able to do some nice things, and then just a few turnovers, and they just happened to happen all at once. Like three of them, and when you are playing against really good competition, you make three errors like that, they capitalize right away, and that lead switched on us quickly. We tried to control the pace just a little bit, and then I'm sitting there.

You have a team of five, six players, and then Charlie, and Charlie is developing like crazy. Man, it would be fun to go out there and deny and press all the time. You know how easy it could be to end a game with only four players? We have to be really careful about how much we're fouling, and then I'm watching it. Okay. Just foul them. I don't care. I'm tired of seeing them get to the rim. It's a Catch-22. We've been able to survive this thing, and not just survive it. We've been able to play some really good basketball. Just don't always get the results that we want.

I think our team felt like they were growing, and that's my number one goal always, and then the winning usually follows it at some point in time. Maybe it wasn't this year. Maybe it's next year. Maybe it's here. Maybe it's somewhere else, but that's always been my goal as a coach for the last 30 years.

Q. You said you weren't on social media, but you have heard the rumor and the scuttle. How does it make you feel to know that your team is behind you?

DOUG NOVAK: It's better than the alternative.

Q. My other question was, you said you had given

some teams scares this year. Do you feel like you gave Kentucky a scare tonight?

DOUG NOVAK: Initially I think we did. Sometimes you guys or even coaches, we think, man, that was great offense because the ball went in. That ball moved around a little bit, and we had some wide-open threes that we needed to make to beat a team like this. They didn't go in. It wasn't because it was a bad shot. It wasn't because it was by the wrong person. It just didn't go in in a timely manner, which we needed to do to win this game.

But I thought we hung in there for a while to give them a scare.

Q. Have you had any conversations with the team about whether you would accept a WNIT invitation or anything of that nature?

DOUG NOVAK: We've talked a little bit with the administration. Nothing has been settled on that. We haven't talked with the team at all about it. When I say the only thing we're thinking about is making sure that we're keeping these kids healthy, growing as a team, I'm not kidding. I have no more time to think about anything else other than that. Now we might have some more time to think about other things because life does move on in whatever direction it's going to go.

Thank you.

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