

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
Greenville, South Carolina, USA
Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Mississippi State Bulldogs Coach Sam Purcell Favour Nwaedozi

Postgame Press Conference

Florida-86, Mississippi State-68

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Mississippi State head coach Sam Purcell and student-athlete Favour Nwaedozi. We'll begin with questions for Favour and then take questions for Coach.

Q. Favour, just your thoughts on this team potentially being in the NCAA Tournament? Obviously you guys have had some really key wins this year. Just your argument to the committee after today's loss.

FAVOUR NWAEDOZI: We are all excited for the opportunity when it comes. We keep working towards every opportunity we get, and we really work hard for it. If we get in the tournament, we're definitely taking the opportunity, and we're going to work for it, and we're going to use every opportunity we get as much as we can, yeah, and enjoy the moments every time.

Q. Favour, I was just kind of wondering, a little bit of a slide now for you guys. This is five losses in a row. What was working so well for you on some of those wins earlier this season as a team that maybe isn't right now?

FAVOUR NWAEDOZI: I mean, losses suck, obviously. But on the defensive end, the defense was really working well for us in the past, and somehow we let loose. I mean, we could have got stops and everything, but we didn't get enough stops to help us win these past few games. I mean, moving forward we're definitely going to get back to our defense. We're going to work on it, because really defense is what wins games for us.

Q. What is it about the match-up against Florida that



they seem to get off quick starts, and you guys haven't been able to really get into your game, because you've been behind?

FAVOUR NWAEDOZI: Like I just said, it's the defense. We really got to get stops right from the jump. We can't let them get off to a head start because that makes the game go slow for us. We didn't do that. That just gave them a good start and made us go slow. But we should have, you know, get stops right from the start to slow them down and give us momentum, which we didn't do.

THE MODERATOR: Favour, thank you. Questions for Coach Purcell.

Q. The same question about sort of your NCAA Tournament fate that I asked Favour.

SAM PURCELL: So multiple parts. Let's, first, give the respect to the SEC. It's an absolute beast. Obviously I'm praying that the committee can close their eyes and simply look at a blind résumé and say, Okay, what is the true body of work, which obviously we have three signature wins.

And then how did they play against certain opponents? Vanderbilt, top 10; LSU, top 10; Texas Tech is in the top 25. You know, a game we were up 32-16, and obviously second quarter just unfortunately only scored two points, but the end of that game was a six-point game.

So there's been multiple games, multiple moments where we've shown against the top teams in the country that we're right there. Then, again, just a credit to this league. Tiffany Daniels and just everybody, and then every head coach of what we have. It's a beast.

Especially for us here when you think about your last three games were possibly two Final Four teams, you played one of the hottest teams in the country, and then obviously Florida just played well tonight.

That's my battle. That's my cry. I'm proud of my kids for the body of work, but obviously there were some ones that if we could look back on, if we would have got, it would

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

have been huge. Hopefully they look at big picture and where we're at.

Q. Sam, if you guys do get that call on Selection Sunday that you get in the field, how do you guys kind of refocus over this next week and a half and fix some of the things that you were so good at earlier this season that maybe aren't quite where you need them to be right now?

SAM PURCELL: Obviously, let's hit the elephant in the room. Tonight, especially like you brought up, when you have lost that many in a row, four in a row, you need to get some momentum.

I thought, again, my young women, the preparation has been phenomenal all year. They came in with great energy, but it started with not getting defensive rebounds.

We forced them to miss some shots, because again, the head of the snake -- and I want to talk about this young lady -- Liv McGill, is the real deal. Just her poise, her ability to pick you apart.

She hit us up for 30 the first game, and we had a game plan that we were not going to let that happen the second game. We were going to make other people beat us, but unfortunately, we didn't rotate like we needed to. Then we had some, I thought, great open shots, all right? It's on both ends. Starting on the defensive end, and then we got to hit open shots.

I talked to my team about this in the locker room after the game. For those that are going to be returning, you want to be playing your best basketball come March, and unfortunately, we just haven't shot the ball good enough at this time of year, which has been a dagger for us.

Q. I was just kind of curious, Jaylah is somebody who usually plays 20 minutes a game for you guys. Any reason she was out today?

SAM PURCELL: I think Awa and Saniyah have been phenomenal in these practices, and I went with the kids that have been unbelievable in practice and given me unrelentless minutes.

Q. O'Neal tonight was another player that kind of gave you some problems.

SAM PURCELL: Yeah.

Q. What was the problem, I guess, in dealing with her?

SAM PURCELL: Yeah, if you look at Florida, that's where

you want to give them their flowers. You got to pick how you want to guard them. They're the big three, right, they start with, and obviously they have great complementary players.

So if you want to take Liv McGill out, who had ten assists and two turnovers, and still she was capable of putting up 22 points, somebody else has to make those shots. When she's clicking, she makes Liv even look a lot more better. She's been shooting the ball, but that's the thing about Florida.

You want to have some pressure, right? Our lack of offense in the first quarter now allows them to play freely and play loose, and that's not what you want to do against a great Florida team that's just able to get downhill and make big plays.

I thought that's what occurred, and again, you got to tip their hat for the way they came out and was able to set the tone for this game.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

SAM PURCELL: Thanks to everybody who puts this tournament together. This is an unbelievable tournament here in town, and the people who work behind the scenes, thank you for making this one of the best tournaments in the country. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports