

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 12, 2021  
Nashville, Tennessee, USA

## Ole Miss Rebels Kermit Davis

### Postgame Press Conference

Ole Miss 76, South Carolina 59

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement.

KERMIT DAVIS: Proud of our team. Those first-round games are always hard. We saw them throughout today in college basketball. A lot of favorites hanging on tight, trying to win games. Happened in our tournament, too.

I thought South Carolina played very, very hard, was physical. Their inside guys played really well. I thought KJ Buffen got us off to a great start, but got himself in a little foul trouble. Jarkel started playing downhill, into his strengths, rally good free throw shooter.

The second half I thought it was really balanced. Had a lot of different guys score, play. Matthew Murrell played good, Robert gave us some great minutes when KJ was in foul trouble. Our main guys of Devontae and Miller were steady. We'll turn our attention quickly to LSU.

#### **Q. Was this one of the more complete wins that you can remember of your team this season?**

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, it was. I mean, I just thought it was balanced. Second half the ball just kind of moved and spread. Even the shots we missed, I thought we got great, great shots. We missed some extra pass shots. But we played inside-out. Our defense created offense like it has most of the year. I thought Matthew Murrell, Robert, just some different guys played good. Sammy Hunter came in, got a big tip in. Robert, a great follow-up dunk. It was balanced. We're going to need a lot of that tomorrow.

#### **Q. What do you kind of remember of your guys' last meeting with LSU? How much of a different team would you say you are now?**

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, they hit us right in the mouth. We didn't really respond. I'm sure their team is different too. I know our team is much different. We have a lot of respect



for LSU's talent, their coaching. We're going to have to be really, really good tomorrow night, changing defenses they have, a lot of switching.

The biggest thing is we have to defend and rebound, be physical with them. That was something we didn't really do a great job of probably a couple of months ago.

#### **Q. Do you think if you win tomorrow you're in?**

KERMIT DAVIS: I think so. I do. Still may be. I don't know. Just little things like the Mississippi State win, they may move that to a quad one win for us. You never know the nuances of the bubble and all that.

But, yeah, we understand we've got to win some games. But it's a big game for both teams, for sure.

#### **Q. Y'all are playing the late game every single day. You have a lot of time on your hands. Do you watch other games of other bubble contenders?**

KERMIT DAVIS: We're staying at a hotel, a great one, J.W. Marriott. They don't have the SEC Network. We're trying to watch it downstairs with Nate, hooking it up for us. I followed a few scores. We're spending a lot of time really on South Carolina. I did some work on LSU just in case today, that scout is already done, just in my mind. Ronnie has that one.

Not much time for that really because I know it's a late game, but it's a quick turnaround for us. We'll meet tomorrow at 10:30 with our team, do some scouting, come back in the afternoon, do some more scouting. Not a lot of physical activity but a lot of mental things we have to prepare for. LSU throws a lot of different things at you.

#### **Q. How have you addressed it with the guys, spoken about the bubble?**

KERMIT DAVIS: We just talked about that we need to go win games. We really just kind of concentrated, I know it sounds cliché, but play our best basketball. We don't have to do anything different, be anything spectacular, special. We just have to be who we are. We think if we are who we



are then we have a chance to play with a lot of teams in college basketball.

That has to start with our defending and rebounding, and tomorrow night we need some timely shooting.

**Q. A year ago to this day you were eliminated by Georgia in the SEC tournament. Talk a little bit about how the journey to get to this point has been.**

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, COVID hit, guys went home for a couple months. Like everybody else in college basketball, it seemed like an eternity, but it went by pretty quick really. Again, what I've said, just so proud of our players, staff, our medical team to get to this point, the SEC.

Yeah, it was an eerie feeling that we got beat, we hated that. All the other circumstances made it -- I've never felt that way as a coach. So much uncertainty where your guys just left campus. Everybody is doing school remotely. It was uncharted waters for everybody.

To see us kind of come out of it, we still got a lot of work to do with the COVID, but it was great to see some people there. A good number of Ole Miss fans. Hopefully we'll have a few more tomorrow night versus LSU.

**Q. You talk about defense and rebounding. How important is it to just kind of control the game and not let them impose their style like they did last time?**

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, it's just the whole thing. They play with a great bravado, a great arrogance. They're good, and they know they're good. So our team, we got to be physical. We got to match physicality, got to be able to guard them, got to get back, win the rebounding battle. Then on offense, we have to play downhill, we got to get paint touches, drive the ball, move it.

I think it's the most talented team in our league personally. I think they got more pros on that team. They've got a good plan. We're going to have to play really well tomorrow.

**Q. You talked so much this year about wanting this team to admit its own offensive identity and be comfortable playing in those 60s and 70s. Do you think tonight was a culmination of that style, just being willing to play the way it can?**

KERMIT DAVIS: I do. You watch these tournament games. I mean, can you win a tournament game? We got in the high 70s. I thought we took some great, great shots in the second half. We missed, the game could have been easily in the 80s. Can you win a game like against

Tennessee 52-50, or Vanderbilt 56-46.

We'll see how the game unfolds tomorrow night. It's a really good offensive team we're playing. We're going to have to have our A game defensively in all areas, our zones, our man, all the different things that we'll do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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