

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 12, 2021

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Ole Miss Rebels

Kermit Davis

Postgame Press Conference

LSU 76, Ole Miss 73

THE MODERATOR: We have Coach Davis. Do you want to start off with an opening statement.

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah. You guys saw it, that was a high, high level SEC tournament game. I'm so proud of our team. That's a hugely disappointed locker room. They fought. LSU has some talent, offensive players kept making some plays. Had the game kind of turned. Jarkel made some unbelievable plays. Our zone affected them. We were down one, Days picked a pop. We didn't get the guy on the backside of the zone to rotate up. He played great. Did a good job on Thomas.

Proud of our team. We played like an NCAA tournament team. We're going to stay in Nashville, stay kind of in our bubble here, until Selection Sunday. If we're selected, we'll go straight to Indianapolis. If not, we'll hear our fate maybe with the NIT. We got basketball to be played, though.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What does it say about Jarkel, the fact he had such a great performance like this on a high stage?

KERMIT DAVIS: You've heard me say it, the game just honors toughness. I mean, it just does. It's corny but it's not corny. It just does. When you're the first guy in the gym, first guy in the meeting room every single time we meet in the hotel this year, that's what you deserve. You got to have talent. He's got talent. He's made some tremendous amounts of improvement. So happy for Jarkel.

I know he's really disappointed. But, boy, he made some great, great plays down the stretch.

Q. You're so close, literally right there on the brink of getting in. After this press conference, are you going to watch the Colorado State-Utah State game and keep



an eye?

KERMIT DAVIS: I'm basketball'd out. I'm not watching any more ball tonight. I promise you that. I have seen enough basketball. I think we're all kind of mentally fatigued.

We have some holes in our résumé. If you're a committee member and you're watching that game right there, you say both those teams are NCAA tournament teams. We're playing like one now. We got beat by a very good LSU team and played at a high level tonight.

Q. Do you think you guys are getting in? What is the mentality going into Sunday?

KERMIT DAVIS: We're going to prepare like we're going to get in. We're going to take tomorrow off. We're going to try to get a practice time at Vanderbilt on Sunday. We'll gather in the hotel, watch the selection show late Sunday, just see what happens.

We'll see. I don't know. Depends on what may happen. If not, the NIT selection comes out later that night. I know we'd look forward to playing in the NIT. I think it will be one of the best fields it's ever had with so many 16 teams. We got basketball ahead. We're looking forward to that.

Q. Was there still a quiet confidence around the whole team in the locker room that you are still a March Madness team?

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, I told our guys, We're going to play basketball. I know it's disappointing. They're heartbroken. We knew if we won tonight, we thought we're definitely in.

We fought it. We fought it. Couldn't make the plays right down the stretch. They made some 50/50 plays. But, yup, I'm proud of our team. Told them that. There are no moral victories at all, zero. But I'm proud of how they prepared.

To see our team two months later from the team that played LSU back in early January to now, to see the progress that we've made, that's a tribute to assistant coaches, the players. They've hung tough now. Quality



team that we developed into.

Q. You say there are no moral victories. Do you think the committee sees things that way? Do you think a game like this or Florida actually does help your résumé?

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, if you're watching the game, I'm sure a lot of committee members were just because we're kind of the number one bubble team in a Power 5 conference. You watch that game, everybody knows how good LSU is. That game is a one-possession game to the very end. If you're a committee member, maybe somebody beats us out, but they know right there that Ole Miss team can go win games in the NCAA tournament. I think people would see that.

Guys, I'm not here to campaign for us. I'm just telling you facts. Been in it for 38 years. Holes in our résumé maybe from a couple games back in December, it may penalize us there. Right now we're playing like one, for sure.

Q. How do you pass the time over the next 44 hours or whatever?

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah, it's going to be hard. We got to do a great job with all of our protocols in the hotel. We'll let them sleep in, get kind of a late breakfast tomorrow. We're going to watch some of this game. We'll take tomorrow completely off. They'll do some treatment at the hotel, some stretching. May try to do something for them tomorrow night. Got to do it in the hotel.

Sunday we will go to Vanderbilt, get like an hour of practice time, some skill development, shooting, break a sweat, break up the day, then kind of see whenever that selection show is at 5 or 6.

Q. How different is this season with this idea that you could get in if one or two other teams have COVID? How does that play in the emotions, what you're thinking?

KERMIT DAVIS: You know, you hate it for those teams that deserve to get in. It sounds like they're including Kansas and Virginia in the committee's brackets right now. I think both of those teams are really trying to play, no question about it.

But you just kind of look at the first whatever, whoever don't make it, you have to stay ready to play, stay ready to go. It's like those guys are trying to qualify on those golf tours. Guys are warming up 6:00 in the morning. Somebody gets hurt. They have to go, boom, play.

We have to practice like we're going to play the NCAA tournament or the NIT.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

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