

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Ole Miss Rebels

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Head Coach Kermit Davis

Postgame Press Conference



Missouri 72, Ole Miss 60

KERMIT DAVIS: I give Missouri a lot of credit. They played well all three times against us. I thought that we came out. Our biggest lead was five at maybe 5:30 to go in this first half. We've had -- we've been really challenged all year long at finishing halves, starting second halves, and it kind of reared its head up tonight.

I thought Missouri -- I thought we had some good spots of physical play, but in the end, I thought they -- their team beat us by 12 on the boards. Physical in the paint, so tonight they played really well, and I thought they were extremely competitive in the second half.

Q. You had 10 points in the first half. Three on 1 of 7 shooting in the seconds. What did they do defensively to make the second 20 minutes tougher for you?

JARKEL JOINER: I missed layups, and I missed wide open jumpers. I think the defense of doing the same thing. Just missing. That's it.

Q. For Matthew Murrell, with the season you guys had higher expectation than how you ended. What's the message in the locker room amongst the players, and how you kind of handled this and move forward with it?

MATTHEW MURRELL: We knew that the season wasn't planned to go this way, but we all just making sure in the offseason we're just working hard and coming back next we're with a vengeance and ready to play and ready to shock the world.

Q. For either of you guys, playing against Missouri three times, was there anything different that they did today and kind of what made them so tough to match up against this entire season?

MATTHEW MURRELL: Just the physicality. We need to match their physicality. This game we changed the game plan as far as switch one through four and one through five. They just got to the rim and made plays.

Q. Same for Jarkel.

JARKEL JOINER: Most definitely.

Q. Coach, obviously you've been at this for quite a while. A loss to end the season or at least probably end the season, how do you take that and how do you have that discussion with your guys? First, the guys leaving, and then the guys that are coming back.

KERMIT DAVIS: You know, I think this is, I don't know, 38 or 39 years in college basketball, and it's probably the most uniquely challenged with some of the guys that we've lost. We lost the highest rated player that's ever played here, Daeshun Ruffin. He was just finding his way and tore his ACL. We lost our toughest defender, Robert Allen, at the Memphis game. We beat Memphis, and obviously Jarkel, he is still not 100%. He had a back procedure.

Every loss is just excruciating to us and our players because it wasn't -- we envisioned us to be a NCAA tournament team, and I still think that, no excuses, that we're whole. I know we sure did not look like one tonight. It's such a different day and time right now than 20 years ago or 10 years ago with the transfer portal.

I know one thing, with Daeshun Ruffin coming back and these two guys right here, and we have four guys in our high school class, that will be a top 20 class, is that we've got a great, great foundation. And we have got to develop the guys back and then we've got to -- can't miss in the portal. We can't miss. We've got to go and find guys that are physical, that like to compete, that can do it in this league.

You know, last year we swept Auburn and Kentucky, and we won the fourth most games in this league, and you think about both those teams now have a chance to win the national championship. You can get well in a hurry. We're going to get well in a hurry. This is not what we



came to Ole Miss to do, and you can get well in a hurry. So it's a tough loss, and the message to our players, we got to go to work. We're not going to let them down. We're not going to let Ole Miss down, and we're going to get to work and build a roster that's going to be able to compete with the very best in this league.

Q. You mentioned the five-points lead you had in the first half. Obviously, they tied up at halftime and got that 11-0 run to start the second half. How much do you kind of think that shifted the game, and why was it so tough I guess after that 11-0 to get back into it?

KERMIT DAVIS: We have been so inept in the last two or three minutes of first halves all year. It's amazing. It's just amazing. Ball is going in, half court shots are going in or our inability to guard and our inability to start the second half. We've done everything imaginable trying to do things to get us better.

Credit Missouri, they just were tougher. They present really tough match-ups. I mean, our big center, you know, is has not really played great against them, and we can't take advantage of his size, and they sure take advantage of their Kobe Brown and those guys driving the ball and shooting threes.

It's been a bad mismatch for us. We've had a lot of success against Missouri before. We beat them last year twice when they were ranked in the top ten. They're a tough match-up for us for some reason, and they just played well all three games. Give them a lot of credit.

Q. You mentioned it earlier just no excuse with the circumstances to overcome, and obviously they've been tough, and you have had some hard fought games. Is that something that you would try to instill in this team and talk about moving forward just how close you were maybe in some of those match-ups you maybe shouldn't have been?

KERMIT DAVIS: Yeah. It's still on us even the loss of the key players that we've had. We lost overtime at Florida and lost overtime at Tennessee and double overtime to South Carolina, two or three other one-possession games, and we haven't made plays at the end of games. And you watch college basketball, and it's not the tricky plays. These guys just go make a play at the end. Whether it's Chattanooga that makes one at 38 or 39 feet to win a game.

It has, it's just been some misfortune, and hopefully it's through. And we just have got to do a better job. I think what's in place coming back and what we've got, but we've got to go in that transfer portal and get some athletic guys

that can go play.

The other night, we played Kentucky and played them well. Five-point game with 1:30 to go. They tipped it up and started four transfers. I have been in this league with my dad coaching since I was 5 years old, and you couldn't imagine that Kentucky would have four transfers to start senior night at Kentucky. You know? It's just kind of the way of the world. Credit Cal and Bruce both what they did to resurrect their rosters, and that's what we've got to do.

Q. You talk a lot about the things you want to do in the offseason. Have you had any talks with the administration? How confident are you that you'll be the guy at the helm going forward?

KERMIT DAVIS: I have conversations. I know exactly -- Ole Miss -- I've got an unbelievable AD. He was a big part of the process with Ross when they hired me four years ago. We've been to the two postseasons in four years, and I thought we were an NCAA tournament team last year, and the last power five team to start.

It's a big boy league, and I get it, but I've got a great AD. We're going to work day and night to get this thing flipped next year, and they've given us every resource to be successful at Ole Miss, so it's right on us. We're going to go out and put together a roster that the Ole Miss fans can be proud of, and we're going to be right here next year hopefully playing for seeding in the NCAA tournament and having a great chance to win at national.

Thanks, guys.

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