

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 14, 2025

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Ole Miss Rebels

Coach Chris Beard

Jaylen Murray

Dre Davis

Postgame Press Conference



between this game and the one in Auburn not too long ago? Coach said defense.

DRE DAVIS: I think it was just a different level of focus coming into the game. Understanding we wanted to make a run and win this tournament. I think it was just a different level of focus and intensity coming into the game, being locked in on what we said we was going to do.

I feel like for the most part we did that. We had some slip-ups here and there. I think for the most part we stuck to the game plan and did what we said we was going to do.

Q. Neutral site games this year. The type of environments that you've been in, the competition this week, in what ways do you feel this prepares you for going into March?

THE MODERATOR: Jaylen.

JAYLEN MURRAY: I would say it's going to prepare us a lot, the simple fact there's going to be more big games we go to the tournament. Got to get ourselves prepared for that. I feel like this is definitely a good test going into the tournament.

DRE DAVIS: Yeah, just piggyback off him, just a good test run. Like you said, we've been through this multiple times throughout the season. I feel like the coaching staff put together a good schedule to prepare us for that with multiple neutral site games.

Just got to get prepared now.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Coach Beard.

Q. You talked about the depth of the league, NIL players causing so many players to return. Can you talk about Johni Broome.

CHRIS BEARD: He was the difference in the game. In a one-possession game he goes 23-15. I think he's worthy of all the attention and awards he's winning. You saw it

Auburn 62, Ole Miss 57

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Ole Miss. We'll ask Coach Beard for some general comments on the game, then we'll take questions.

CHRIS BEARD: Good, hard-fought game. Congratulate Auburn on a victory. Defensive game. Easy baskets were hard to find throughout the game. If we hold Auburn to 62 points, we should have a chance to win the game, and we did. Thought we played some good defense today.

They're the SEC champs. Projected 1 seed. You guys just saw it. What does that make Ole Miss? We can play with these teams. Disappointed locker room right now because we expected to win this game.

I didn't think we got beat, though. Like I told the guys, sometimes you win, sometimes you run out of time. I really felt like a little bit more time on the clock. We liked where we were.

Congratulate Auburn. A defensive, tough game.

Lastly, basketball is about making shots. Today was a game we needed to make nine or 10 threes. Mathematically, how the game was set up. For us to shoot 17% from three-point line. Most of those were good looks.

Couple shots, one more rebound, we win the game. Congratulations to Auburn. We wish them the best of luck here in Nashville and in the NCAA tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Dre, what in your mind was the big difference



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today all the way down to the last play.

Shot clock differential was just enough. We got a coach's decision do we try to get one stop, we're going to have about 10 seconds with the basketball, coming down with a broken floor, or do we extend the game by fouling.

Defense got better in the last seven or eight minutes of the game. We made the decision, players believed in it. What does Auburn do? Veteran team, well-coached, they get the ball to the right player in the right spot, and he made a tough shot. Not a tough shot, but he made a contested shot.

The question was about Broome. 23-15 on the biggest stage before the tournament. Last play his team has to make a play, and he's the one that does it.

Q. The last two times you played, it's been shootouts really. That wasn't the case today. Do you feel the familiarity that you have built with each other attributed to it? What led to it being such a different game thematically?

CHRIS BEARD: The first two games, Ole Miss-Auburn, were a bit surprising. We scored the ball at a rate well enough for win the game, didn't defend enough.

Oxford we played really well. Auburn, I thought it was their A-plus game. Coach Pearl even mentioned that after the game. Today's game was defensive, tough.

Again, it's not slighting Auburn at all. When we go 4-21 from the three-point line, and most of those were good shots, a couple late shot clock kind of forced. I would say 17 of the 21 were probably shots that you have to take and you have to make to beat Auburn.

If we make our normal 35%, 36% threes as a team, we score enough points to win.

Q. Different teams kind of develop at different rates in the year. You've had success everywhere you've gone. At what point did you realize this team would be really good?

CHRIS BEARD: That's a good question.

Of course, in recruiting when you put the team together, you have high expectations 'cause you see them playing in front of you.

But when it gets real, it's probably when competition starts. We had a really good summer. We set up our summer a little bit different than the past with new teams, portal, new

players. You can't just spend your whole summer working drills, shell drill. You have to get out there and play a little bit.

We had multiple inner-squad scrimmages with officials. About halfway through the summer, we started visualizing how this could be a good team.

Certainly your non-conference, early win against Colorado State, who I think is an NCAA tournament team, our MTE put us against BYU, a really good team in the Big 12. We lost in overtime to a Purdue team that's still alive today, I believe, in the Big Ten tournament.

I think the combination of putting together a good team with recruiting and roster management, watching those guys begin the gelling process in the summer, and then some success in the non-conference, I'm not going to say it raised our expectations, but it validated -- what is that word? -- verified what we thought the team could be.

Q. What is your message to your team headed into the NCAA tournament? You've played Auburn three times. Being in the SEC, played one of the hardest schedules out there. How do you think that's prepared you for the tournament?

CHRIS BEARD: Yeah, so the message immediately after the game today, again a hurt locker room because we expected to win this game, was that I didn't think we got beat today. I think we ran out of time. We could have put two more minutes up there and play a little bit more.

I thought the effort was good today. But when you play a team like this, you have to play well in almost every area. We took care of the ball, especially in the second half. We played good enough defense for the most part. We got to do a little bit better job on the backboards. We got to make some shots. 4-21.

The message for the team moving forward is we've always had kind of the same model in March. Two things, really simple. We tell the players we want to be us. Why? Because us is pretty good. We're one of the best teams in the country. We're going to get a nice seed, at-large bid in the tournament. Let's not show up to the NCAA tournament and be somebody we're not. Let's be the best version of us.

Secondly, we want to have some fun along the way. Yeah, it's a business trip, no doubt about it. Man, you work your whole life in coaching and playing to play in the NCAA tournament, so let's don't forget that. Let's enjoy every practice, shoot-around, bus trip, the camaraderie, the hotels, the meals. You know this, man, the meals in the



NCAA tournament are really, really good. Nobody even skips the salad portion of the meals because the salad looks like you're at one of those Brazilian steakhouses.

We're going to get some gear and enjoy ourselves. We're going to smell the roses, as we call it. That's always been our plan in March. Sounds simple, but to me that's the way to do it. Be the best version of yourself, be us, smell the roses along the way, play with fun, enjoy.

Our timeouts, we got guys smiling with joy. We got a chance, let's go try to win this game. That's always been our message in March and will be this week, as well.

Thank you.

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