

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 13, 2026

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

## Ole Miss Rebels

## Coach Chris Beard

## Patton Pinkins

## Ilias Karmardine

### Postgame Press Conference

Ole Miss 80, Alabama 79

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ole Miss. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Beard.

CHRIS BEARD: We just wish Alabama good luck in the NCAA tournament next week. Really good team. Explosive offense. Really good players, including in my opinion an NBA first-round draft pick. Really a problem to defend.

Give our guys a lot of credit. First on the list is we just beat a really quality opponent that I think has a chance to make a Final Four this year. I wish Nate and those guys the best.

In terms of us, whenever we out-rebound the opponent, we have a lot of success. That was a focal point in the game plan. We got that done.

Alabama is so hard to guard. We went back and forth between a no-threes defense and also protecting the paint. I thought the coaching staff did a really good job. Wes Flanigan had a really good scout. Everybody contributed to this game. I thought our players did a good job believing. Every four-minute timeout we set up how we were going to play a little bit different.

Four guys in double-figure scoring tonight. That's kind of our formula. Another low-turnover game for us. The stat sheet will say nine, but I think we had two turnovers in our last three or four possessions. So other than that, it's six-, seven-turnover games, exactly where it has to be for us to have success in this tournament.

We set this up as our second four-team tournament here in



Nashville. Tomorrow we'll have a chance to win the championship in this four-team tournament.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for the players.

**Q. Patton, throughout these games, y'all have never trailed or played from behind. What's that been like? What's been the driving force behind that? How do you prepare for tomorrow's matchup?**

PATTON PINKINS: Yeah, I didn't know that till I saw it on SEC Network.

CHRIS BEARD: When are you watching TV (laughter)? In your room or something?

PATTON PINKINS: Yes, sir (smiling).

Yeah, I didn't see it till SEC Network. We're just playing our game. We're not done yet. We have a game plan each and every day. The coaching staff has done a great job of that. We're just trying to play our best basketball in March.

**Q. Patton, can you walk me through the final defensive possession. Take me through that.**

PATTON PINKINS: Yes, sir. Just kind of found myself in no man's land. I saw Labaron to the basket. I think it went off one and made some type of crazy pass. I didn't see anybody on the three-point line. I saw the big catch and just went down there and tried to make a play for us to win.

**Q. Ilias, I want to ask specifically about the three-pointer you hit, the turnaround one with the shot clock expiring. How did that play out? But also about your confidence tonight, where was it at?**

ILIAS KAMARDINE: I just watch the shot clock and I see two second remaining. There is no way I don't shoot the ball. I just shoot it. It went in. That's good for us.

CHRIS BEARD: That's good coaching.



ILIAS KAMARDINE: Pretty good (smiling).

**Q. Ilias, possession after possession when you guys needed a bucket, it seemed like you were the guy taking that shot the last five minutes. Was that something they were giving you or something you decided you're going to put the team on your shoulders?**

ILIAS KAMARDINE: No, that was the game plan, especially because we know the big going to play defense on me one moment of the game. I just tried to be aggressive and play my game, control the game and make the right play on the right moment.

**Q. Alabama fans definitely traveled well. How did it feel playing in that arena?**

PATTON PINKINS: It was fun. Yeah, definitely did get loud a couple times when they went on a run, a couple runs actually.

But we were poised. Did a good job kind of when they went on a run, we went on a run, yeah.

CHRIS BEARD: I think we have a lot of good fans that travel with us, too. We're super appreciative. Came to my attention today we have six Ole Miss students that came to Nashville instead of spring break. They've been at every game and stuff. Shout-out to those six students. Want to invite you to come by the office when classes resume and Mark Adams is going to take you out to eat.

**Q. Patton, from the outside this is an underdog story building with you guys being the 15 seed. Is that something you lean into or reject?**

PATTON PINKINS: We're just trying to play our basketball. We could be the 1 seed or the 15 seed. We're just playing Ole Miss basketball, trying to stay hot in March. The coaches have done a great job. These players haven't given up. We've not quit. We're going to dog it out till then.

**Q. Can you speak to the opportunity you guys have created for yourselves here. 40 minutes away from playing for an NCAA tournament bid.**

PATTON PINKINS: Yeah, it's just survive and advance. We don't look ahead, we take it one game at a time. Anybody can get hot in March. We're just trying to keep that up for the next game.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you. We'll

continue with questions for Coach Beard.

**Q. Alabama played with a lot of space, a lot of intensity. They amplified that in the second half. How do you think your team did playing with that kind of tempo, specifically in the back court?**

CHRIS BEARD: The best we could. They're a lot to handle when they start coming downhill with reckless abandon.

Everybody thinks about the three-point shot. It's obviously one of the parts of their identity. But I would argue from my standpoint, and I'm not in their locker room every day, I think their ability to get downhill, get to the free-throw line, the paint. That was really the coaching decision on the last possession. You stay committed to guarding the three-point line, they're just too explosive.

We rolled the dice there a little bit and protected the rim late. But they're really, really hard to defend.

**Q. You mentioned in previous press conferences shifting your strategy to rest and recovery. Do you feel the momentum from the two games you've already played have helped you carry along momentum and beat Alabama who approaches the game rested?**

CHRIS BEARD: Back-to-back days with that one? It's nice. Front tuck, shirttail completely tucked? Like it. I didn't know what a front tuck was till this summer (laughter).

Here's the deal. I'll tell you what we told our team. The first thing, we set the tone early this morning. Saw a couple guys kind of yawning as they came into breakfast. That's not going to work.

Just reminded the guys that this whole narrative they might be reading, they might not, we urge our guys to get off their phones this time of year. We all know they're probably on 'em.

Is Ole Miss going to be tired after playing 80 minutes? I don't believe in that. These players, they're not 29, 30, 31 years old. They grew up playing in the summer, sometimes three games a day on the AAU circuit. All of them in their respective basketball journeys played pickup basketball seven days a week for hours and hours and hours. I know that was true for me, Conflans Park and Northwest Rec in Irving, Texas.

There's no excuses here. You might see that narrative. But depth is one thing that we have on our team. We were prepared to play as many players as we needed to tonight.

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That was the thing, we set the tone this morning. Same routine that we've had the last two or three days here in Nashville. We're not going to buy into this deal where it's three games in three days.

Yeah, who cares, it's basketball.

**Q. One thing to say survive and advance, tune everything out. The way your team has played, to not trail, what is working specifically to have that mentality?**

CHRIS BEARD: I think finally we're seeing the vision of our team. We're playing really well right now. Out-rebounding the opponent, taking care of the ball, balanced scoring, timely execution, late shot clock. We're just doing a lot of good things.

I know many of you haven't followed our season other than the win/loss record. I know that's not easy to look at. But we played some good basketball. We can play with anybody in this league. We played Alabama in Oxford, Mississippi several weeks ago. Basically tied game at halftime. One-possession game about 10 minutes left. They hit us with a haymaker. The final score wasn't reflective of what the game really was.

I wish I had a more elaborate answer. We're playing good basketball. We got a lot of belief. The guys are continuing to prepare. We had guys this morning, this afternoon, watching their clips from yesterday's game, getting prepared for tonight's game.

Just really happy for our players. They deserve all the credit. They've refused to quit. We're executing game plans. We're playing good basketball. I think we'll be a factor in the rest of this tournament.

**Q. Two nights in a row you had to withstand a furious late rally to win. Had a lot of poise tonight, maybe more so than you had early in the year. Sometimes we can't hear it, it looks like your team is communicating better on the floor. Is that fair?**

CHRIS BEARD: More than fair. I agree. One of our challenges this year has been communication. Player-led teams is the only way to win in March. In November and December and January, you're working towards that. We just didn't get it done. It's not all on the players.

For some of this season, it has not been one of our best coaching jobs. Here we are standing at the end. Our communication is better. I thought tonight we used the timeouts well again. It's kind of scary not having one late, but I really wanted to try to get a good look at that

out-of-bounds play. That was a coaching decision.

Travis Perry did a good job tonight on the inbounder on our press breaker, two hands on the basketball, confident. Nobody was hiding tonight. We made just enough free throws to win the game.

**Q. What did it mean to you as a coach to see the way Ilias played tonight, turnaround shots?**

CHRIS BEARD: He's a good player. When you talk about really good players, they have so many things in their bag. I mean, it's that balance of time and score and who's guarding you, what does the team need now.

Ilias has about three shots he can get off at any time. I thought tonight four assists, only one turnover, obviously scored the ball tonight. For Ilias, it's about controlling the game. Ole Miss can win if he has eight points and 10 assists. Sometimes Ole Miss needs 17 points from Ilias.

Tonight I saw a lot of courage. One specific thing I will not forget. Alabama has a drastic game plan where they put their big on Ilias. He got a big wide-open three and missed it. The next time down, he had the courage to take it again.

Basketball, percentages are going to always even out. That's something I will never forget about tonight's game, a lesser player may have turned down that second open look. They are basically begging him to shoot at that point. So a lot of respect for Ilias having the courage to take that shot.

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