

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 10, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Memphis Tigers

Alex Simmons

Madison Griggs

Postgame Press Conference



East Carolina - 65, Memphis - 63.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

ALEX SIMMONS: It was a hard-fought game by both teams. I thought our team did a great job in the first half of playing disciplined basketball. Not fouling a lot. In the second half I thought that's where the game kind of switched on how we were able to play and what we were doing, which caused us to get a little bit undisciplined. We knew we had to take care of the ball, kind of similar to how we did the last timeout against East Carolina. Having 18 turnovers, you know, that's not really our identity. We had two great looks there at the end. Obviously just couldn't finish. But, again, a hard-fought game by our team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. When you look at the team this season there was a lot of fight, a lot of heart and a lot of grit. When you look at the seniors and Madison Griggs specifically, what has she meant to the program and the foundation that you're trying to lay, but in addition, what has she meant to you as the head coach?

ALEX SIMMONS: I think Madi's meant everything, not just to our university and our team, but to our community and to the city of Memphis. Obviously, she's from there, but her loyalty speaks volumes, in my opinion. To me, I think, because Madi trusted me from the beginning, I think that her teammates also started to trust a little bit more and more and more. We were able to get super close, not just talking about basketball but just talking about life in general.

I think this year was Madi's kind of coming out year. Obviously, you look at stats, this year has been her best year, but when you look at the type of person she is, I think she was very, very misunderstood in the past, I think she's developed and flourished into a great leader, not only for this basketball team, but she will be a leader in life. So, you know, she's meant everything to me, my family, and our team and our program.

Q. When you look at, as a head coach, what you want your team to look like and embody, if you look at the second half of the season, obviously today didn't end the way you wanted, but did you see what you wanted to see from an Alex Simmons' coached team in the second half of the season?

ALEX SIMMONS: Yeah, you know, not all the time, but a lot of the time we did, we saw that defensive intensity, we saw us playing in transition, we saw our post players scoring and our guards making threes. That's kind of where we want to be. I think one of our issues today is for us is it was somewhat of a low-scoring game and a very slow-paced game, which I think messed us up, especially in the second half. They tried to slow us down with their 1-2-2, but I think we definitely had some glimpses of what we want our team to look like. I did tell the team in the locker room that I think the buy-in happened a little bit too late. It happened, but I think it was just too late for us to be able to finish how we wanted to finish, but I think it's also a learning lesson for our team.

Q. Kind of a roller coaster season, the season didn't start the way y'all might have wanted it to, you turned it around at the end winning five of the last six. Obviously, the season didn't end the way you wanted it to today, but do you feel optimistic about Memphis basketball moving forward?

ALEX SIMMONS: Well, yeah, I think when you look at what we did this season, how we finished, and I know me, so of course I'm optimistic. Obviously, recruiting plays a big part in that and I like our freshman class that we're bringing in. It will be important to, if there are transfers and things like that, to fill the gaps in what we need right now,

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but I definitely, I definitely think this senior class got us going in the right direction.

Q. Madi, obviously not the way that you wanted the game to go today, final one as a Tiger, but when you look at this game or just this season completely, I mean, how do you feel, just knowing that you gave it your all this year and led this team to a potential championship run?

MADISON GRIGGS: I feel somewhat satisfied, not a hundred percent, because it didn't end the way I expected it to, but I'm satisfied with the part that I know that I did try my best, and I did get a lot better this year. I gave everything that I could to my teammates and to my team, whatever they needed, I was there and I gave it to 'em. So, you know, that's the part that I am satisfied of. Yeah, that's pretty much it on how I feel.

Q. Madison, when you look at the front of the jersey it says Memphis. Coach just talked about it, you're from Memphis, you understand what it means to be from there. What does it mean for you to put that jersey on for four years and play for the city?

MADISON GRIGGS: It means everything. I'm born and raised there, so I know the ins and out of it, so I know how the people respond to how we're doing good in the season or how we're not. It brings us a lot of confidence seeing that the team is for us, like we're the city's team, honestly. They bring so much level of support to everyone and to the team and to the games that we have to put on this jersey with a lot of pride, knowing that we're playing for something that's just bigger than us. Even the people who just got here, they learn really quickly that when we put this Memphis jersey on, we're not just playing for us, we're playing for the city, everything, and everything around us. So, we all put a lot of pride when we put our jerseys on every day, especially me.

Q. Alex, I know you spoke about your relationship with Madi, but I know another senior that you're very close to is Ki'Ari Cain. Just being able to have that additional season with her over at Memphis, what did that mean to you in being able to share that moment with her?

ALEX SIMMONS: For all the seniors that chose to stay, it was important, it was huge. Ki as a point guard, it obviously was big for her to come here. I know and she knows that we're two people that trust each other. I'm not sure that Ki had the season that she had, but I'm not sure that she didn't need to have this before. She obviously moved on with life. She's been through a lot of adversity in her life. I think when things get hard, that's when you learn

your biggest lessons. I think she will leave Memphis, and I hope we can keep her around in the city and things like that, but I think when she leaves our program, she will leave a better and stronger person than what she was when she came in.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Coach, thank you.

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