

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Ball State vs Ole Miss

Friday, March 21, 2025

Waco, Texas, USA

Foster Pavilion

Ball State Cardinals

Brady Sallee

Ally Becki

Madelyn Bischoff

Media Conference

Ole Miss 83, Ball State 65

BRADY SALLEE: Congrats to Ole Miss. Wish them the best. The group I just got to coach this year and a little bit longer than that, it is something that coaches only dream of. So proud of them. So happy for them that they got to end it in the NCAA Tournament.

I'll answer all kinds of questions about the game if you want me to, but really for us, we're upset because we don't get to do this anymore with each other. That's been the special part of it.

Storybook season and just awfully proud of my team.

Q. For either of the players, we talked about how special this season is all year long. How would you put this 2024-25 season into words?

MADELYN BISCHOFF: Definitely memorable for the rest of my life. Something I'm never going to forget, especially this team with all my teammates, coaches. It still doesn't feel real. Feels like I'm coming to practice in two days. Hasn't really hit me yet. But it's just so sad.

But I'm so glad that I got to finish my last year of basketball with my best friends, and we accomplished everything we wanted to, and I'm forever grateful for that.

ALLY BECKI: Yeah, it's kind of hard to put into words, but this seem is extremely special, and this whole year has just been special. We came in as the No. 1 seed and you're supposed to do this, do that, whatever, blah, blah, blah, but it just comes down to who you have on your team and who



you have behind you. We gave it all we got today, and it just obviously wasn't enough. We came up short. But this entire season has just been awesome. Just the friendships that I was able to create with all the recruits that came in, especially for one year, you don't get that long to kind of build each friendships, but we built them.

It was fun. These group chats are going to be forever. It's just, what Maddy said, just grateful for this opportunity and just bringing everyone along with us and having my parents come see me, like that just means a lot to me, too.

Q. Obviously, as you said, it was the friendships that you got to create even for that one year with those freshmen. When you look down at your freshmen and sophomores that are on this team, what's some advice that you'd be able to give them going forward?

ALLY BECKI: Yeah, basketball is just a game. At the end of the day, yeah, sometimes it's people's jobs if you get to play on a higher level or whatever it is after basketball, but I don't know, it's a confidence thing, and giving them the confidence they need is everything.

I just hope that we kind of gave them something other than just being good at basketball or anything like that, just learning life lessons.

Yeah, just seeing the freshmen and the sophomores, it was awesome to be around them, and they were a great group of humans. They'll be good, and they've got him, so they're fine.

Q. Ally, when it's been a while since the school has been in the tournament, what's it like as a player? You kind of mix the joy of being in versus needing and wanting to perform in the moment to try to advance. What's that like as you build up to the first game?

ALLY BECKI: Yeah, I mean, Audrey, our assistant coach, she's been through it, and she was just giving us all the best advice she can. She's been through it, so that helped a lot, too. We went in there and tried to play our game, and it wasn't enough. But you've just got to kind of take it with a grain of salt and just move on.



Q. Madelyn, they had two of them with double-doubles, which kind of illustrated the dominance on the rebounding. The numbers were decidedly in their favor. Did you anticipate that being a challenge going in, and how difficult was it to try to keep them from controlling things down there?

MADELYN BISCHOFF: Yeah, our main focus before the game was definitely get rebounds. We want to win the rebound battle. But we came up short, and like what you said, they had a double-double.

Yeah, but we just have to move on and learn from it.

Q. Ally, it's a one-point game, late first. I think it was a 12-0 run that seeped into the second quarter. What do you think happened? How did they put their stamp on taking control there do you think?

ALLY BECKI: Yeah, honestly, I kind of black out every game. My adrenaline is going so much. I can't even really answer that because every game is just like back and forth, so yeah, I don't really know.

Q. You guys talked about the relationships you guys have formed over the four years and been through the program for all your four years. What's the lasting impact that Ball State women's basketball has on your overall life?

MADELYN BISCHOFF: Yeah, Ball State basketball will forever be part of my life. Looking back at what Ally said, with all the freshmen and sophomores, I hope they, in the next couple years, can see us, like the senior class, and be like, I want to be a part of that group in four years. I want to graduate with a great group of friends and memories that are going to last for a lifetime.

Yeah, Ball State basketball will forever be a part of my life, and it's really sad thinking that it's to an end now, I guess. But I just hope that our legacy and stuff really inspired others to be like us, our senior class.

ALLY BECKI: Yeah, the four years went by so fast. I can't even put into words how fast it went, but it felt like a long time, too. I mean, I don't know. The whole ride, my freshman through senior year, just amazing, honestly. All the people that have went through Ball State with or without me or without us and all the coaches, I'm kind of just forever grateful for them. They made an impact on my life, and I'm just trying to do the same thing.

Yeah, just kind of excited for the next chapter and see where everything goes, but I just hope we made a good

impact for the people below us. It's time for them to write their story, too.

Q. What's one last thing you wish you could do in that jersey?

MADELYN BISCHOFF: Probably just play one last game with my teammates and my friends because it just goes by so fast. Also, just to thank the community, too. We wouldn't be where we are without them. And the cheerleaders and Code Red and everything, and the band, they've been with us through it all. Just play one last game and thank everybody who's been a part of our journey.

ALLY BECKI: Yeah, I would say just hang it up, honestly. Just hang it up in our little box we get on senior night. It's hard to realize, but it's done. It's over with. Not much to do, but I just want to just hang it up in my house at home and just admire all the things that I've been through with this whole team and this whole program.

Q. Brady, maybe the game wasn't quite as much of a blur for you. That late first quarter into the second, what do you think was the key to Ole Miss taking control?

BRADY SALLEE: Yeah, I thought we threw the first punch. We kind of settled in and we made some shots there. Then I thought in transition, they got it on the rim, and where they had settled for some early jump shots, they got it on the rim, and they settled themselves down with a couple transition buckets.

Of course, with them, it always starts on the defensive end, and they take defense and turn it into offense.

Then once that snowball started going a little bit, I thought they settled in and looked like what I had seen on film, going and getting boards.

I thought at halftime, the boards were relatively even, and it really hadn't been a huge, huge factor, and then like great teams do, they stretch it out there in the second half.

But I think in that stretch, I think their ability in transition to play a little bit faster than we could build our defense was really the story of that run.

Q. You guys came out in a 2-3 defense, which is a little uncharacteristic for the Ball State Cardinals. What went into making that game plan choice?

BRADY SALLEE: Yeah, we've done it this year before. We've kind of played makes and misses, trying to keep them off balance a little bit. I thought that we could,

hopefully, make them one-dimensional and try to turn them into jump shooters.

Early on, very early on, they were, and then -- they know who they are, and they weren't going to settle for that.

But that was the thought behind it, and we've had success playing like that with a couple games this year. Our kids were -- they were in on it. There was some feedback from them that they felt good about the makes and misses and trying to change up defenses a little bit.

They started settling in a little bit against the zone, and they were getting it to the nail a little bit too much. So then we just had to get out of it and go back with what we're used to.

Q. You've seen this senior class go through, obviously, Senior Day, their last MAAC tournament, and now their final game at Ball State. If you could sum it up in words, what does the class of 2025 mean to you?

BRADY SALLEE: Well, it's funny, I'm listening to Ally talk about hanging her jersey up in her house. I think it's going to be hanging up in a bigger place than that one day.

I think what she's done specifically for our program, for the university, it's going to be hanging in that arena, and I believe that.

But just the whole group of them, they really -- they changed a really good program into a great program with the work they put in, the belief in each other, in the system.

But here's their legacy. It's about the loyalty they showed our university. It's about the decision. When a lot of kids are jumping all over in the portal and that stuff, they made the decision to do this together and to stick with Ball State. That part of it, I don't know that we'll hear a whole lot of stories like that anymore.

You've got to credit their families. They come from great families. It meant something to them to do this together.

Any coach will tell you when you get a group like that, you just count your lucky stars. I'm old enough and have been through this long enough that I really took time this year to appreciate them, and multiple times, thank them for that loyalty, that trust.

This group won't be soon forgotten.

Q. Kind of moving on from that with this team, obviously, you said you'll really never forget them and

it's going to take a long time, too. Going into next year, how do you move on from this roster of women that kind of led the minutes for the team, as well?

BRADY SALLEE: Yeah, it's probably too early for me to even think about that. You're just so knee-deep in trying to win this game and trying to just go get 40 more minutes, and that was really the thought with it.

It's part of the job, right? If you've got a program worth a nickel, you graduate good players. Years ago, I had a very similar question after Nathalie Fontaine, our all-time leading scorer, graduated. And in my head, I was probably like, holy cow, we're in trouble, this kid is leaving, and then we won 20 something the next year. It's just the job.

It's what they pay me to do, and I've got a great staff.

It won't be easy. I don't think we'll replace this group. We'll just have to figure out a way to build a roster and do it the best way we can with that part of it.

Nothing is going to change in our program. We'll keep coming back to this bad boy.

Q. Ole Miss lost in the first round here three years ago. It was South Dakota's first ever tournament win. Different building, but same campus. I wonder, as an opposing coach, how much do you think about that? How much do you try to make a message out of that, with like, hey, Ole Miss might be coming in here, trying to do something to try to erase that memory?

BRADY SALLEE: Yeah, we knew they were motivated. They had a lot of stuff going on. I think they felt slighted because they felt like they should have hosted. I don't know that I can argue that because, honestly, I didn't pay that much attention to their season until we drew them.

But when you get into this tournament, if you're looking for motivators, you've got problems. But we knew we were going to get their best, and we knew that their belief in the level that they can play is probably their biggest strength.

Again, when you've got the veterans we do, they get it all. They understand it.

Real quick, I don't want to go off too long here, but while you're talking about this campus and this place, what a first-class operation here. The people, the facilities. We had an absolute perfect time here. It's because of the people that take the time to shake your hand and make sure you're taken care of.

I just thought the facility, first class, the staff, first class.



Couldn't have asked for more. Baylor, the university and the department, should feel really good about what they've done.

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