

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Ole Miss vs Baylor

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Waco, Texas, USA

Foster Pavilion

## Ole Miss Rebels

## Yolett McPhee-McCuin

## KK Deans

## Tameiya Sadler

### Media Conference



years ago, but I'm sure you know how it all went down, losing the first-round game, not getting a chance to play Baylor in the second round. I know that it's a totally different team, very few players. I think maybe just one player who was there. But have there been any conversations along those lines with Coach and, Hey, we're going back there and we would maybe like to have a happier ending this time?

KK DEANS: I think we -- I mean, we was all playing college basketball at that time, so we remember what happened. But it's a new season, new team, and we're just blessed to be here in the second round. We made it to the second round, so it's already a different thing. So just taking the opportunity at hand and ready to play tomorrow.

TAMEIYA SADLER: Yeah, just to go back on what she was saying, this is a great opportunity for us. We're super excited to be here. Falling short wasn't in our plans -- in their plans three years ago, but we are here now, and we're just going to embrace the moment.

**Q. Yesterday I watched Baylor and Grand Canyon play and obviously it's a home game for Baylor and a partisan crowd. I know y'all experienced that last year, having to go on the road, but does being in the SEC and playing in some of the venues that you play in -- (audio interruption.)**

KK DEANS: Yes, of course. The SEC is the best league and, like you just said, we just went to LSU and played them on their home court and for the first time beat them. They haven't been beaten on their floor. So we've been preparing since the first game of the season in Paris.

So a lot of road games, a lot of crowds, so this is nothing new to us, so we're just going to take it, the challenge at hand, and play our best basketball on their floor.

TAMEIYA SADLER: Yes. Same thing (laughing). It's the same. We've been preparing for this throughout the whole entire season. So, yeah, we're ready.

**Q. KK, similar to that, there's been so much conversation about you-all feeling -- you thought you**

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Had this been in Oxford, we would have had -- (laughing). It's the truth. We have media support.

We're happy to be playing in the second round. 32 teams remaining after today's games. We look forward to going up against Baylor on their home floor. We're no strangers to playing on people's home floors, so we're excited about the opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You've looked at the Baylor film. Does anything stand out to you about anything you saw?**

KK DEANS: We had a chance to watch a little bit of film this morning. They're a great team. I think it's going to be a great matchup. Very excited for the opportunity to play here and, yeah, just excited.

TAMEIYA SADLER: Same for me. I'm super excited to be on this stage and, yeah, just being able to watch these two teams go at it, so it's going to be fun.

**Q. Both of you, if you could address this. Tameiya, you weren't there three years ago in Waco, were you? I'm assuming you weren't?**

TAMEIYA SADLER: I was not.

**Q. Okay. So for both of you, you weren't there three**



**were going to get the home court for the first two rounds, and you probably deserved it based on what all the numbers said, but you have been to some of those places. What do you think might be a little bit unique about Baylor in the sense of some of the history and how many times they have used this Waco thing to get to the Sweet 16 versus, say, Notre Dame which, also has quite a few Skins on the wall?**

KK DEANS: I don't think there's much of a difference. I feel like when you have an opportunity to play at home, you're going to try to put on for your home crowd. But we don't look at that. We look at it as another opportunity to play this game that we love and that we're blessed with the opportunity to play with. So as a team, we're going -- they're going to put a great game plan together and we're going to try to execute it to the best of our ability and try to come out with a victory.

**Q. How much do you appreciate Coach Yo just kind of doing that whole let's embrace this, yeah, we would have liked to have been at home, but let's not worry about it, let's just go play?**

KK DEANS: That just is a testament to who she is and nothing's ever been given, so we respect all and we fear none. That's the attitude that she's poured into us this whole season and we're going to continue to do it this post-season.

**Q. For both of you, Coach Yo is very demonstrative about her -- basically an attitude of gratitude and not being -- you know, there's a lot of coaches that would have spent a lot of media time complaining about not hosting, and she didn't do that and y'all didn't do that. Does just her spirit of gratitude, does that rub off on ya'll? Does that impact you in your daily lives even off the court?**

KK DEANS: Of course. I mean, we're a reflection of her at the end of the day. Just that approach, I mean, I can speak for myself, just being injured last year and not getting the opportunity to play in this position, that's the attitude of gratitude itself. So just, again, being blessed with the opportunity and -- because, like she said, she had a feeling of being 0-16 and not having the opportunity to even play in this tournament.

So when you're put in situations where things don't go your way, you're always thankful for when the opportunity presents itself. So she's poured that into us as a team and as players, so that's how we reflect from her.

TAMEIYA SADLER: For sure. We are a hundred percent in control of our own destiny, so we can't worry about what

we can't control. So at the end of the day, we're just happy to be here. It's a great opportunity. And yeah, I think her attitude in this sense, it also prepares us for life within basketball and life outside of basketball.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll release the student-athletes and take questions for Coach.

**Q. Same thing I asked the players, what have you noticed about Baylor just in watching -- I'm not asking you to divulge any game plans, but just what stands out about them to you?**

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, Baylor is an aggressive team. They want to get out in transition. They are pretty balanced. They have a force on the inside, and then they have some pretty good guards, so we'll have our work cut out for us. A lot of similarities in style of play, and so I think the team that executes the game plan the best will come out on top.

**Q. Coach, three years ago -- you're about to have the matchup you were hoping to get three years ago when you had the first-round loss. Since you've been to Stanford and Notre Dame, how might this be different? And the same question for the players, how does that experience at Stanford, at Notre Dame, kind of translate here?**

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, I didn't -- there wasn't a matchup I was hoping for because I know that it's March Madness for a reason. So just like South Dakota beat us they went ahead and beat Baylor the second game. So, for me, I kind of try to -- I think this is the time of year where you just focus on your team and preparing them to go up against whomever. So this year it happens to be Baylor.

What's different? This group that I have, the schedule that was put in place has prepared us for this moment, opening up in Paris, France, playing UConn on a neutral site, going to NC State and it was sold out, playing at LSU in front of 10,000 people. We're prepared for any type of environment, and we're prepared to play any style of team. It just so happens that Baylor is a team that their style is kind of similar to ours, so to speak. So I think we'll be ready and this will be a great challenge and I'm excited about going up against them.

**Q. Is there a particular opponent you've had this year that Baylor reminds you of or is similar to?**

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, I mean, they got a dominant big inside, so you can go -- let's see. Where do I start? You can go Texas, you can go South Carolina, you

can go Oklahoma (laughing). I mean, you can go through a lot of dominant bigs in the Southeastern Conference. So that will be something that we have seen before.

And then they have good guards. In the Southeastern Conference, every team has good guards, you know, from really young guards to experienced guards. So that's what I'm saying. Like, the style of play -- the league is so diverse now that we have kind of seen everything. Like, Ball State, there were teams that reminded us of Ball State, the Vanderbilts, the Arkansases, Missouri. Now we have Baylor, and that's more of a Texas, more of a South Carolina, LSU. We've played against this style and the league has prepared us for that.

**Q. You mentioned yesterday that three years ago it was y'all's first time together and it's a totally different team, more prepared, etcetera. How much do you think the experience helped you? If you add up these four years in a row, for you as a coach, how much does that help going into a high-stakes situation here?**

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, I mean, it has definitely prepared me, but I think that preparation has been a part of my journey my whole life. So I've always had to -- I've always been the underdog. I've always -- I've never had a breakaway layup. I've always had to do a combo move or a euro step to get my two points. That has really been my story.

When we -- I can go back to when I was at Jacksonville, and we beat Florida Gulf Coast, and they were the juggernauts in the league, and we went to their place and beat 'em. It was their first time losing in seven years. When we went to Palo Alto, I think they had only lost three home games.

And so it's just something that I'm very comfortable with, and I think it's because I don't let the moment become bigger than what's in front of me, which is the game plan. We're always going to have a great game plan. I have a great staff that has experience. My staff, Quentin Hillsman has coached in a championship game in the NCAA. Coach Joy and Coach Emp has played in the Elite 8 and has numerous NCAA Tournament experiences. And then have you me. This is my fifth NCAA Tournament experience as a coach, as a head coach.

So we have a lot of experience and this is just, to me, another game. I don't look at it like this is -- I mean, I think the pressure's on Baylor. I don't think the pressure's on us. They're at home. So as far as we're concerned, we're just coming out and trying to execute our game plan as best as we know and can.

**Q. The Associated Press rankings notwithstanding, you chose to really load some tough teams on your schedule. Can you talk about how -- you could have had cupcakes, you could have had more wins and maybe be ranked higher, but at this point, now that you're here, you obviously must prefer that you played those games.**

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: There's no question. I mean, now, there were times where I was like, Man, I wish I had taken the easy year route (laughing). I felt like maybe we got penalized for it, because 20-10 doesn't look sexy, but our strength of schedule's a 3. You're hearing the names that I called. And then, just being in the Southeastern Conference, we're playing, I think there were eight teams before us that got ranked. There were eight teams, and then you got South Carolina who is up there, LSU is up there, Oklahoma, Tennessee was up there, Vandy got ranked, Alabama. I mean, it's a dog-eat-dog world and it definitely has prepared us for this moment. So, although there were moments I wish we had played a little bit more easier teams, my team is incredibly confident as far as their ability to play right now. Like I said, our last loss was versus the No. 1 team in the nation at the time, Texas, and it was by two possessions. So we're confident.

**Q. You talked about how appreciative you are of the administration and the chancellor who has been supportive of you. But do you feel like, I mean, honestly, I feel like they should be appreciative of you. Do you feel that they give you credit from the university?**

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, I think we are all a team with the intent to give the best student-athlete experience that we can and we try not to make it more about me or them, it's really about the student-athlete. You know, I never asked them that though (laughing). But I do feel my impact in the Oxford community from my foundation, what we do, the countless free clinics and empowerment summits and the way we put ourselves out in the community and the way the community loves us back. I'm never unsure about what the crowd is going to look like on a weekend, they come out and they support us. And I think that anybody that's not doing it in 2025 is a little bit behind. There are a lot of things right now that can pull administrations, people, a lot of different ways, right. Just the way the business is going. But women's basketball matters. The impact that it has matters. And now we're receiving units. And is it what we want it to be? No. But it's a start, and there were a lot of people that came before me that fought for it to be where it is, and I hope that it will continue to grow.

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