

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

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Williams Arena

Ole Miss Rebels

Yolett McPhee-McCuin

Latasha Lattimore

Debreasha Powe

Media Conference

Q. For both of you, what was it like having Sira back on the court? What role did she play? And I mean, looked like she didn't miss a beat. What did it feel like to have her back on the court?

LATASHA LATTIMORE: I would say it was amazing. It felt like we had our full spark back for real because recent games we been playing -- we're a good team regardless of the fact, but I feel like Sira adds just a little a spice to our team. She does the little things that we may miss or may not see.

So I was -- I feel like everybody was so happy to have her back. She really did an amazing job for her first game back, so, yeah.

DEBREASHA POWE: Spark is the word I was thinking of. She's everywhere, defensively, offensively. It was just great to have her back.

LATASHA LATTIMORE: She took my blocks. Four blocks.

DEBREASHA POWE: Yeah.

Q. When you committed to Ole Miss, I interviewed you and asked you right after commitment why Ole Miss. One of the things you said was because you believe in the vision that Coach Yo has built here.

DEBREASHA POWE: Yeah.

Q. You thought it was going challenge you, grow you, and stretch you in every way. Has it?



DEBREASHA POWE: Yes, it has. It was a great decision. The culture, just her vision for us, she believes in us and we believe in each other. We been able to just grow and be battle tested. Every time we came on top, so it's been a great experience being here.

LATASHA LATTIMORE: Uh-huh.

Q. You're also the only Mississippi player on the roster this season. Does it mean a little more to you when you're representing the state you came from?

DEBREASHA POWE: I mean, yeah, I guess. Being from Mississippi is great, so being able to be the only player from Mississippi has just been fun. They know I'm from Mississippi. They can tell. Yeah, that's been really fun.

Q. I don't know if you stuck around for much of the second game yesterday, but the crowd was much different than it was for the opener with the home team on the court. That arena has a reputation of getting super loud, especially as the Gophers are doing well. SEC obviously many places that compare to it. Are you ready for a different environment than what you saw last night?

LATASHA ROWE: You want to go first?

DEBREASHA POWE: Yeah, I think so. Like you said we played in the SEC games and we've experienced crowds just like that. We're prepared and ready for it.

LATASHA LATTIMORE: What Breasha said.

Q. Latasha, you really turned it on during the second half of the year. You led the team in scoring against Gonzaga. Was there a certain point when Coach Yo's system really started to click for you? Has it been gradual?

LATASHA LATTIMORE: I feel like it's -- it clicked at first but took me a little while to understand it. But I definitely want to say -- I would say when we started conference is when it finally just like, okay, this is what you need to do



and how you need to play, on the wall, on the line. Things just started to come to me as we entered conference.

But non-conference was what helped me lead up to being able to understand what the defense was or what her offense was and just everything all around.

THE MODERATOR: Start with an opening statement and go to questions.

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Well, I'm definitely grateful to be one of the representatives of the one the 32 teams that will be remaining after today.

So we got our hands full with a very good Minnesota team. Looking forward to the opportunity to compete.

Q. I think apparently the physicality of SEC teams is apparently a little shocking to some outside your league. Can I get to you talk about the physicality in the SEC and how that prepares your team for the tournament? You've talked about it before but maybe there is some new to watching ya'll that don't understand.

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Well, the SEC is the baby WNBA and in the WNBA you're playing with grown women, and so there is a component that if you're not physical enough you won't be able to succeed.

Most times, in most things, right, unless you're doing ice skating or something like that. Maybe you need to be a little lighter. But physicality usually reigns supreme in the sports world.

I even remember -- I just drew a blank. A golfer, he went and got beefed up and I was like oh, my God, they even beef up in this golf. I seen Steph Curry beef up because you have to be able to withstand the physicality. That's why Cotie is going to be a first round pick, because she's physically fit for the next level.

So I'm fine when people talk about the physicality of the league because that's what it is. We have a bunch of high level athletes that are preparing themselves to play at the next level.

What I'm not okay with is when it's used as if it's -- as if it's, you know -- when other connotations are used I don't like that, because that sets another -- I know we play a clean style of basketball. We just don't let you have what you want. That's what dictate and disrupt means.

Just because we don't let you have what you want to do, then it's your job as a coach to figure out how to combat

that with pressure releases and the like.

Minnesota is a physical team, and so we embrace that because we have high level athletes that play on our team that want to play at the next level, and if you're in the physical enough you won't make it.

Q. This will be the third Big10 team you guys played this year. Stylistically how does Minnesota compare to what you face the against Wisconsin, Michigan State?

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Wisconsin, that's right. I was like, who is the third? You know, I think they all have similarities. In the Big10 they're physical teams, strong, fundamentally sound, especially Dawn's team. I've played against her, coached against her a bunch.

And so they're going to do what they do and they're going to try to combat what we try to do. I think this is going to be like a great game tomorrow because we're both familiar with each other's styles.

Now, the players have to figure that out. But a lot of continuity. She doesn't complicate things. They get right to it.

So they're going to be aggressive on their drives and we're going to have to stay in front of them and do our best to try to limit them as much as possible.

Q. On that note of the players having to figure it out, you have Cotie who has played against Minnesota the past three years.

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah.

Q. Has she been able to drop any tips or hints about what they do and what it looks like on the court?

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: People don't know this, but Cotie is a Taurus like me, so that's a bull. She has all the answers. But she is familiar with them and has shared things about them in general.

But one of the things on a serious note that people don't know about her is she studies the game a lot. She has been watching film on them ever since she realized that we could potentially play them.

So she is definitely been on the sideline giving her tidbits because she knows them really well. I kind of feel like that's an advantage for us, whether they don't have anybody that's played in the South Eastern Conference so you kind of have to feel it as you go through it where she understands.

Q. You've got eight players on your team with at least -- who averaged at least 15 minutes a game. That kind of depth is unique. How do you use that best to your advantage?

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Well, here's the thing. We want to pressure and dictate and disrupt for 40 minutes. Humanly you just can't do that with five people, so you to have rotations, people that can come in and want to do that.

It's also a reason why I only have 12 on the roster. It's like is saying happy wife, happy life. Happy team, happy coach. So you know, less is more. They all know that they'll get opportunities to play.

When of the things I like about what we did in the offseason is we kind of put our team together with the Lauren Betts in mind. Minnesota has two big post players and we're able to combat that. I thought when I watched the game yesterday, Green Bay did a phenomenal job. When that big girl got tired they had nothing.

I think they went from her to maybe like a 5'9" player. You just can't stop Minnesota inside with that kind of side. So we're able to combat that and play a bunch of different styles.

One of the things that really helped us Sira was out for a month and Jayla was out. So other people had to step up and it allowed us to build our bench for times like that.

Q. At this point in the tournament, how important is it for your team to just stay locked into your identity, versus making adjustments for a Minnesota or whoever?

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, well, I think you have to make some adjustments just because you're going to play a team that you hadn't played. I'm trying to see who I can compare Minnesota to in our league. It's kind of hard to do. That's why we play a non-conference, so the Wisconsin's that can drive, shoot, space, and run the motion style offense.

So there is a part where you have to game plan and strategize. But we have a system defensively so a lot of things we don't have to change. If anything we just make tweaks. But so that's what, 40%. The other 60% is the Ole Miss way, how we play. Offensively rebounding running, sharing the ball. Defensively dictating and disrupting. We want to be able to do that.

I think something that people don't understand that's

unique about our program is it doesn't have to be the same way every time. Like the way we had to dictate and disrupt Gonzaga will be slightly different versus a Minnesota team, you know what I'm saying? That's when the strategy comes into play for our coaches and that's why I think it'll be a great game.

I'm sure there is things that they do really well and they'll try to combat it, and then I'm sure that there are things we do well that we'll try to combat what they want to do.

Q. You said last night after the game that you were I believe the quote was a happy camper after seeing Sira come back the way she did. A, how is she feeling today? How is the rebound? And then B, what was lacking? Was it just a matter of adjusting to time?

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

Q. What was lacking when she was out of the lineup that she now brought back?

YOLETT McPHEE-McCUIN: Well, great question. The first part, we were in practice today and we went hard for two hours. It was so funny because Debreasha was right on the sideline and she said, boy, it's good to have Sira back. (Laughter.)

I looked at her and I said, you're telling me. So needless to say she looks great. She's got some rust off and will only get better as time goes.

The four games that we lost, what Sira brings is an edge. She's the head of our defense because she's the one who picks up the ball 94 feet.

She was really committed to it and covered for a lot of our players. So now that we have her back other people can just kind of go where they wanting to and do what they need to do a little bit more comfortably because she covers for them.

The four games that we lost, those were unique because three of those were when we played four games in eight days. Then we were able to grow because we won two games in the SEC tournament versus Auburn and Vandy. The two seed right now.

I saw all this to say everything works itself out how it should for this time. Sira brings that competitiveness, that edge, and she's a stat stuffer. 12 points, 8 rebounds, 4 blocks, three steals. That's par for the course for her. Yesterday I told her, I said before the game I'm like, don't even be worried about being anything other than just a great defender for us.

Usually when that happens the offense is seamless and I expect her to be better as time goes on. So we need to win so we can keep getting a better version of Sira.

Who's a sophomore by the way. (Smiling.)

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