

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Mississippi State vs California

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Los Angeles, California, USA

Galen Center

## Mississippi State Bulldogs Debreasha Powe Jerkaila Jordan

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have Mississippi State with us. We have our student-athletes Jerkaila Jordan and Debreasha Powe. Questions, please.

**Q. Jerkaila, I want to ask you this. This is your last go-around, your second NCAA Tournament with Mississippi State. How much of a motivating factor is it knowing this is the last time you're going to see the floor this tournament?**

JERKAILA JORDAN: Honestly, just grateful going out with this group. A special group of my teammates, coaching staff. Blessed to be back in the tournament.

Just going out there knowing that it possibly could be my last, so giving it all, not only for me, but for the fan base and community of Starkville.

**Q. A couple of questions. First, congratulations on a great year. You had a career high 40 points.**

JERKAILA JORDAN: Thank you.

**Q. Playing in probably the toughest conference in women's basketball right now. I want you to talk to me about how that kind of felt. You started off obviously the first top game against South Carolina. You tended to trend better. LSU got a little bit better, and then obviously only lost by four against Texas. Tell me what that process was, the growth going from that. I guess, probably 20-point loss to South Carolina to only losing by four at Texas coming into the season, and how it's prepared you for this tournament.**

DEBREASHA POWE: I just think the biggest thing is you want to be playing your best basketball in March. Like



Sam said earlier, each game you want to get better, and it showed. We've gotten better. We're working harder. We just want to see ourselves get better so we can be prepared for games like this in March.

**Q. As a follow-up, the three-point shot, Cal shoots the ball, shoots a three-point shot really well. In those games in particular, that was one of the parts where there was a little bit of a struggle. How have you tried to address that as you move forward into this tournament knowing that that's going to be one of the big factors in playing Cal?**

JERKAILA JORDAN: Like you said, Cal, they're a great three-point shooting team. Just focusing on finding them early. Obviously Coach Sam says they're a great team, so they're never out the game as long as they can make threes.

Just find them early in transition, knowing their shooters, knowing their transitions, just being aware, and trying to get them to do something different.

**Q. This could be for Debreasha or Jerkaila. Last season things down the stretch of the regular season didn't go your way. Just missed this NCAA Tournament. What was different about this team that kind of weathered some storms and stuck with the process at the end?**

DEBREASHA POWE: I would say we just know. Like you said, we didn't like how we finished last year. We was hungry. We wanted it this year. We knew we wanted to be playing in March. Like you said, each game we had to work and practice.

Like you said, basketball is a game of ups and downs, and we understand that, but it's how you take those difficult situations or those losses whether you have the mindset of we're not going to let this be down. We're going to take this loss and we're going to learn from it so we can be better from the next game, and that's what we did this year. We knew we needed to finish strong. We wanted to be playing our best basketball in March, and it matters.



**Q. Obviously in the 2022/2023 season, Debreasha that was your first season. You're a graduate student, right?**

JERKAILA JORDAN: Yeah.

**Q. How would you say that prepared you for this time around considering that obviously you made a good little run from the first four to the second round? It's obviously tough to be able to be one of those last teams in with everything against you and make that type of run. What would you say you took from that to bring it to this season?**

JERKAILA JORDAN: That's actually what we were just talking about. Me and Debreasha, we were on the team that made it to the tournament. We were on the team that didn't make it to the tournament. We had a lot of highs, lows throughout these past three seasons. We've been with Coach Sam.

I feel like out of anyone we're the two that's seen it all, that's seen the good and the bad and learned from it all. We played SEC ball for me for, like, four years. Just like she said, taking everything we learned, passing it on to our new teammates, the transfers, the freshmen, and just being as one.

Like you said, going into this tournament with momentum, a chip on our shoulder from last year not being able to make the tournament, but still grateful we're here and just trying to win as many games as possible.

THE MODERATOR: You said SEC ball. Describe SEC ball for people out here that might not be familiar with it. I know it's one of the toughest conferences out there. Either of you or both of you.

DEBREASHA POWE: SEC basketball is dominant. It's very physical, but it's talented as well. You're going to -- when you come out, it's going to be a fight every game. It's going to be really good basketball. You can't take nothing for granted. When you're out on there on the court, you have to leave it all on the court day in and day out. You have to play like it's your last game because especially in the tournament now, like you said, it's a one-game tournament.

JERKAILA JORDAN: I agree. Very fast, very physical, extremely physical. Just like she said, there's no SEC team that you can just go out and be, like, yeah we're going to beat them. Every team is competition. Every team brings their best. You just have to bring your best every game.

THE MODERATOR: You talk a little bit about your opponent for tomorrow, Cal, but could you get a little more in depth? What do you expect from them? What do you need to do to beat them and that sort of thing?

DEBREASHA POWE: Like Jerkaila said earlier, Cal, like you said, they're known for shooting threes. They do shoot a lot of threes. For us to beat them, we have to know where they're at. Communication has been the biggest thing Sam has just emphasized in practice is talking. If we're not talking, it's going to be a long night. We have to talk. We have to communicate. We have to know where the shooters are. We have to rebound.

They have dominant posts that rebound really hard so we have to box out. Those have been the things that we have been emphasizing, and we know that's what we do to win. If we close out, have high, active hands at all times and rebound, it's going to be a really good night.

THE MODERATOR: How about the state of this program? Two three straight 20-win seasons. You've built quite a foundation. What do you see moving forward that you have provided?

JERKAILA JORDAN: Honestly, I'm just looking at just all the accomplishments Coach Sam has brought to this program. I was here before Sam. I stayed here with Sam. I wouldn't go nowhere. I'd play under Sam again if I had another year.

Like you said, three seasons, 20-plus wins, first three seasons. That's an amazing accomplishment. Two NCAA Tournament runs. He's brought me to the tournament for the first time. This is my second time being to the tournament with him. I just give all praise to him and grace to him.

Yeah, he's just an amazing coach. He's very passionate. He will run through a wall for you. Just makes you want to get on the court and run through a wall for him. I thank him for everything.

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