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OLE MISS HEAD COACH KERMIT DAVIS INTRODUCTORY PRESS CONFERENCE



DR. JEFFREY VITTER - OLE MISS CHANCELLOR

Opening Statement:

"I want to welcome everyone to The Pavilion at Ole Miss, the greatest, most spectacular place in the country to watch college basketball. Today is a very exciting day for Ole Miss and especially for our basketball program.

I want to thank Ross Bjork for his tremendous leadership of Ole Miss Athletics, and his vision that got us here today to our introduction of Coach Kermit Davis, who is here with his wife Betty and daughters Ally and Claire.

I also want to recognize some special guests. Two of our trustees from the institutions of higher learning are here with us today, Dr. Ford Dye and Mr. Shane Hooper.

And my wife. Please applaud. I'll have a much better rest of the day, if you do (smiling).

When the search process began for a head basketball coach, I asked Ross to really find a coach who has three key traits. First of all, a proven track record of building a successful and a lasting program. Second, is really understanding the basketball landscape of the Southeastern Conference. Third, is the leadership ability to model the core values and the creed of this great flagship university, not to just the student-athletes but to all students.

Ross has succeeded admirably. Here we are today introducing Kermit Davis to all of you. Kermit doesn't just check the boxes on these three traits, he embodies them. Ross is going to tell you more in just a bit about Kermit, and really his record speaks for itself.

One thing that continues to wow me is the unwavering respect that coaches and experts in basketball across the entire country have for the new leader of our basketball program.

So on behalf of Rebel Nation, Sharon and I would like to become the Davises back to Mississippi and into the Ole Miss family."

ROSS BJORK - OLE MISS VICE CHANCELLOR FOR INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

Opening Statement:

"Thank you, Chancellor Vitter. Greetings and welcome to Craddock Court at The Pavilion. It is a great day to be a Rebel. Thank you all for being here as we celebrate and welcome the Davis family to the Ole Miss family, but back to Mississippi. I think that's very important to them, by the way.

I want to thank Chancellor Vitter for his support throughout this search process, really his leadership throughout in leading our great university.

I want to give special thanks to Coach Tony Madlock and our basketball staff for leading and coaching our team over the last couple weeks of the season. They did a terrific job leading our team, and we appreciate all the hard work.

We have some of our players over here. Guys, if you would wave. We want to thank you guys for being here.

I know we've got some former players, Coolidge Ball texted me, I don't know if he made it or not. John Stroud. I heard he might be coming. If you're a former basketball player at Ole Miss, stand or wave to be recognized, please. We also have Dan Liebovitz from the Southeastern Conference. Dan oversees basketball for the SEC, has really led the vision and charge to bring this resurgence back of SEC basketball.

I want to thank Keith Carter, our deputy athletic director. Keith was with me every step of the way in the search. When you got your name and banner and picture on the wall up here, that's pretty good to have in the interview process, to have a great Rebel like Keith Carter, what he does for our athletic program.

Also Chad Chatlos from Ventura Partners. They were our search firm consultant. They did a really great job. We really had a great team throughout this entire search. I'm thankful for everyone's work.

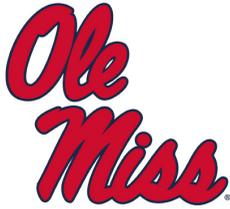
So our quest was to find the next leader of Ole Miss Basketball. It was really simple: find the best coach and the best person who can create a new identity and a new beginning for Ole Miss Basketball.

I had to make sure that I was focused throughout the search, so I created a list, a list of characteristics that I believe a head coach must possess in order to be successful. Before and after every conversation that I would have about this job, I would look at that list and make sure that we were focusing on finding the best coach.

It was important that we found someone who could live up to a high standard that we have set for this job. First a proven winner. Second, someone who possesses a program identity. Third, a recruiting machine. Then player development. Next, interpersonal relationships with today's student-athletes is a must. Then someone who is committed to academics, disciplined, organized, they had passion, leadership and integrity.

I'm proud to say that Kermit Davis checks the box on every single one of those characteristics.

When I did interviews with our friends in the media down here on press row, I talked about that our vision was to be a consistent NCAA Tournament team who would compete for



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ROSS BJORK - OLE MISS VICE CHANCELLOR FOR INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

championships, wake up on Selection Sunday, Where we going? Not if, but where.

My thought was, if we can't visualize success, we don't believe, then who will? So it was important that we sought a leader whose vision aligns with ours, a coach who sees the grand potential of Rebel Basketball, someone who is not afraid to embrace this opportunity, find ways to capitalize on the resources that are here in place.

Knowing that we had a head start in the process, we were able to assess the entire landscape, speak to basketball experts across the country, determine who would be the best fit for Ole Miss Basketball.

Every time we turned around, the answer was consistent and matter of fact: Kermit Davis is the best coach, the best leader to take our program to the next level in the SEC and the NCAA.

When you combine his brand of play, his proven ability to build a model basketball program, Coach Davis has established himself as a leader and winner in college basketball.

Over the last several weeks, we consistently heard that other coaches never want to play his teams. His record confirms that.

Coach possesses a great sense of purpose, does it the right way off the court as well. I first met Coach Davis back in 2010. He probably doesn't remember, or he does remember, at the Sandestin Hilton at the Sun Belt Conference meetings. Despite the rivalry between Western Kentucky and Middle Tennessee, quite a rivalry, but we're on the same team now, I always watched him carry himself. I said, 'That guy has it. He's got it.'

So our analysis, what made him perfect for the job? Several things stood out above everyone else. His teams play hard and they play together. They trust and they believe in their system. His style of play will travel. If you don't know, it's hard to win on the road, but his teams rebound and they play defense. They possess a great culture of discipline, accountability, they get it done in the classroom. Despite being the last team left out of the tournament this year, he built an NCAA Tournament program at Middle Tennessee, not just a one-hit wonder who burst onto the scene. He built a program to last, and he'll do the same thing here at Ole Miss.

He also led the charge to build fan support. When we talked to him, he said, 'How soon can we sell out season tickets here in the Pavilion?' He goes, 'I'll make the phone calls.'

Coach, we got a phone book for you (smiling).

We know that his Mississippi roots will pay dividends for the entire university. He'll go anywhere and everywhere to sell Ole Miss Basketball. He's got the hunger, the drive, the energy and the vision for our program to be successful.

So Betty, Ally, Claire, Fletcher, get rid of that maroon. Coach Davis, the original Coach Davis, no more maroon. Clean the closet out. We want to welcome all of you to Oxford and the Ole Miss family.

Please welcome your new basketball coach, Kermit Davis..

KERMIT DAVIS - OLE MISS HEAD MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

Opening Statement:

"Dr. Vitter, Ross, thanks so much for the tremendous opportunity. I'm honored to be your coach. I am truly honored. I've been so impressed as the process went on by the leadership at the University of Mississippi, Ole Miss Basketball. I wanted to align myself with great leadership, administration, at a prestigious university. That's exactly what I did.

So I feel comfortable aligning myself, Dr. Vitter, Ross, in the leadership, the magnificent people that I met, the support staff, have a vision to try to create a national brand for Ole Miss Basketball. We can definitely do it.

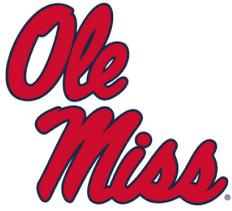
Special thanks also to Keith. Keith Carter, he was instrumental. Unbelievable what he's done in our transition. Keith can get me to go to a human resource meeting, he's a stud, got me to go to one today. But Keith, when I was assistant coach at LSU, I came to Tad Smith. I've grown up watching Ole Miss Basketball my whole life. I came to Tad Smith. I don't think I've ever been in an arena where a fan base had an attachment to a team. Many of you guys were there. It was Keith Carter, Justin Reed, Michael White. That arena was electric. You know what, you guys connected with that team. You identified with the passion and the energy and the relentless play that they had.

I know as we go, I have Ronnie Hamilton, Win Case, we'll hire some other fine assistants here. That's who we would like to epitomize right there, just his toughness. Thanks, Keith, for everything you've done.

The term Mississippi Made. Boy, does it fit us. When you get me, you get all of us. They'll come from all over north Mississippi right here. We're going to sell a lot more season tickets just because of our family. Mississippi Made is my dad. I would like to introduce Kermit Davis Sr. Stand up, dad.

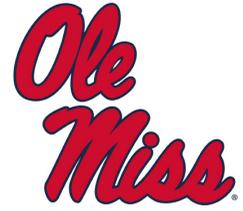
I grew up in a gym watching him coach. I knew at four, five years, that's exactly what I wanted to do. Dad grew up in Walnut. He said he grew up in Faulkner. Ask him how much in the country was it. We had to walk nine miles towards town just to go hunting. That's in the country.

My mother Nancy. Nancy is from Slayden, Mississippi. Born and raised on a farm in Slayden, Mississippi.



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KERMIT DAVIS - OLE MISS HEAD MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

My brother Bill, his wife, live in Olive Branch, Mississippi.

My sister Jennifer, she's in Tupelo, Mississippi, in the furniture industry right there.

Then obviously Claire and Fletcher got married in June. They live in Tupelo, also.

We are so excited about being back with family and friends.

Jim Valvano said in his ESPY speech, if you can do three things in one day and show emotion, you've had a heck of a day. You can think, you can have a good cry. Honestly, I did shed some tears leaving a place we love in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. If you can reach great laughter, joy, extreme excitement, which I've done. I've had three unbelievable emotions in one day.

We're attached to Middle Tennessee State University. We spent 16 years there. It was a community. You'll find out Betty and I are family. We want to do regular things around everyday people all the time. We want to be a fabric of this community. That's just how we operate. That's just how we work.

It was hard to leave Murfreesboro. It really was. That was a place I thought I may be there the rest of my life. We built a national brand in basketball at Middle Tennessee. I would only leave to leave for a prestigious university and a place that I think is in the best basketball conference in America.

Last year we played here at The Pavilion. I brought our team here. I was walking and jogging the day of the game. I've seen the campus here all my life. You really are just amazed at the infrastructure here. I can come to a basketball program here with my staff. I told our players today in a team meeting how fortunate we are to be in a place, this right here is the finest college basketball arena in all of America. I know you know that. We've been everywhere. You go to the Tuohy Center, offices where our guys work out, the Manning Center, the FedEx Academic Center, on and on. The things that Dr. Vitter has on the horizon with our campus. That's the place I want to align myself with.

You don't have to do anything with facilities, it's there. You have to sell it to your recruits. I told our players, I said, Guys, how lucky we all are that we're right here. We get to come to work and go to school at this place every single day. We're going to try to take advantage of it every single day we can.

At Middle Tennessee, our brand. What is Ole Miss Basketball going to look like? It's going to be relentless, athletic, explosive, a team that's going to have to play on and on and on to beat. It's going to be a team that's going to be unselfish. We're going to play fast and smart in transition. We're going to try to get easy baskets. We're going to try to play with great body language. We're going to be a respectful team that respects the flag and the National Anthem. All those things from culture is what we're about. It's who we're going to be.

We're going to have a team, I'm telling you, I'm going to spend every ounce of breath of trying to sell every season ticket in here. Think about it. You want to help us in recruiting, help our team. You cannot have a national brand without a national fan base. When your national fan base starts traveling to watch you play, now you've hit the national scene.

The way you can help us is this: help our team win. I think we sold five thousand season tickets this year. If we can sell seven thousand season tickets, this Ole Miss Nation is good enough, that is good enough by the time we play our first game November 5th or 6th next year. No doubt, we can get it done.

When you bring in recruits, they see this place rocking with the students, how they've aligned it right here, then you start directly affecting recruiting. When a national fan base can affect wins, start affecting recruiting, now everybody is in it together. That's what we're trying to do.

At Middle Tennessee, you'll see an academic culture. In May we'll have four guys graduate, 52 straight players in a row that have received their degree at Middle Tennessee. The two years before this tournament we made it but this year I thought we got snubbed. But that's the life of a mid-major. It's going to be so nice to be in the Southeastern Conference.

The last two years, there were six teams in college basketball that won a game in the first round of the tournament and had 100% graduation rate: Villanova, Duke, Notre Dame, Butler, Kansas, and Middle Tennessee basketball. We're not only going to hopefully please you with our efforts on the court, we're going to bring an academic culture here. That's what it's all about.

I'll be brief. What is building a brand? Everybody talks about a brand. How do you build a brand? What is a brand? Well, to me a brand is a promise delivered by your experience. You're in the stands. We can give you a vision of the brand. We can give you a vision of how those guys right there are going to look when they get on this court next year. We can tell you.

You know what it is, it's a promise delivered by the experience that you watch. Then you know who creates the brand? You guys do. The fans tell each other what the brand is. It's not what the coach says it is. The fans tell each other what the brand is. When you guys are leaving The Pavilion, you tell each other what you think the brand is, the product we put out. I hope it's toughness, hope it's passion, hope it's energy, hope it's great body language and I hope it's winning. I hope it's high-tempo, high-action play.

The University of Mississippi has an unbelievable national brand. It's known throughout. Students come from every state in the country to come to our school right here. What we're going to try to do is try to create a national brand.



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KERMIT DAVIS - OLE MISS HEAD MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

I think this. I'm replacing a good friend of mine, Andy Kennedy. All-time winningest coach in the history of this school. Andy and I have talked. I mean, he's unbelievable how giving he is, his love for this university. You know that. I mean, just the things that he's told me about you guys, the positive things, some of the things that he thinks can help us be successful.

So I promise you, Andy Kennedy is going to be a Hall of Famer here, he'll be in the Mississippi Hall of Fame before his day is over, I guarantee you that. All we're going to try to do is try to build on the era that Andy brought basketball in to The Pavilion. That's what we're going to try to do. We're going to build on that.

I told our guys, I watched you beat Florida, I watched you beat Alabama, Mississippi State right here. I watched you go to Missouri and win. I watched all of that, okay? There were some great moments this year in basketball. Now what do we have to do, guys, to make this consistently all the time? An everyday product, where every day we're at that level all the time.

I hope that we're going to add some pieces in the spring. The individual player development with these guys working. If we can do that, if the best players that are sitting over there will be receptive to coaching, we're going to win games next year in a really, really tough league. The brand is what you say it is. We've got to all do it together.

The last thing I'll say is everybody says, Well, how does it feel to put on a red tie? I said, 'Boy, it felt good.' I'm telling you. I'm going to wear that red blazer. I promise you this, there's a lot of great Ole Miss people in this room, but nobody wants to beat Mississippi State's tail more than Kermit Davis. I guarantee you that. I promise you that, all right?

I've been listening to this chant all of my life, all of my life. Are we ready? Are we ready?

Hell yeah! Damn right! Hotty Toddy, Gosh Almighty Who The Hell Are We? Hey! Flim Flam, Bim Bam, Ole Miss, By Damn!

I've been wanting to say that for a long time. I promise you it feels better to say it than it does to listen to it. I'm honored to be your coach. I look forward to meeting all of you. Thanks for being here. Thank you.

PRESS CONFERENCE

Q. Kermit, a lot of your current players are out in the audience right now. What kind of conversations have you had with them? What has the response been?

KERMIT DAVIS: You know, as I went through the process, I had two teams for a while. The only two things I was really worried about were my guys at Middle Tennessee and the Ole Miss players. We had a lot of great, positive conversations with all of them and we talked about the process. I told them I would be down as soon as our team stopped playing.

On the phone today we had a great team meeting. They've all been very, very receptive. I think they know they're at a great university. It's just a start. I told them, 'Guys, I don't come into one team meeting, think I know everybody, can figure somebody out. This is going to be a process.'

But I said, 'What you're going through here is natural. I left the locker room at Middle Tennessee, a culture of winning, and my guys are going through the same thing there. It's a healing process here.'

They were really receptive. I enjoyed seeing them today.

Q. Along those lines, I'm sure you don't know for sure yet, but do you expect any attrition?

KERMIT DAVIS: Hopefully there's not, but sometimes attrition occurs with change. Like I said, I just met with them as a group. I'm going to be on the road, in and out, recruiting. The biggest thing for me is to spend some time with them individually. Those are the things that my staff and I will do over the next four to five days.

Q. Kermit, obviously your recent success has been well-documented at Middle Tennessee. Eight or nine years there, looks like it took to reach that level.

KERMIT DAVIS: We're not going to have eight or nine years here, I promise you that.

It was a situation to where we took over a program that was really, really struggling. They went to a new league. I hate to make excuses, but we went through a ton of injuries for a four or five-year period, winning 18, 19 games.

But it's the life of a mid-major, having to win your conference tournament to get into the tournament. Everybody sees NCAA upsets. You know what? Those are the upsets in conference tournaments. All these teams you watch in NCAA tournaments, most of them got beat in their conference tournaments. Doesn't really matter because they're in already. It's the magnitude of that tournament.

We're proud of what we did over the last seven or eight years.

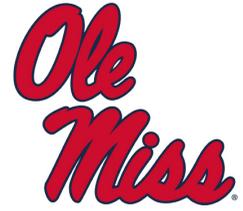
Q. The expectation here is to make the NCAA tournament every year. How do you make that happen?

KERMIT DAVIS: Number one, the strength of returning players. We've got to improve those guys. There's talent in that room. There's talent. We've got to individually get their development to go up. The culture of bringing other guys in during the spring is going to be critical for it. You're in a league that maybe next year, eight or nine teams will go.



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PRESS CONFERENCE

We have a system of play. It's a system of play we know how to recruit to. We know exactly what we think Ole Miss needs to be successful in this system of play. I just think with this product to sell, we're going to get good players.

Q. You put together your roster at Middle Tennessee with a lot of transfers. I know that's part of the climate of the game. Do you anticipate doing the same thing here or do you sign and develop more high school players?

KERMIT DAVIS: Reggie Upshaw, high school player, Ed Simpson a high school player from St. Martin's High School. We're going to do it with a balance. Here in the SEC, you need to do it with high school players.

When I was at LSU, we signed the number one junior college player in America three years in a row, so you can do that. There may be a grad transfer out there this year that fits a need. But I think as your program gets hold, we're going to do it dominating with high school guys.

Q. Where are you in terms of assembling your staff? How far along are you?

KERMIT DAVIS: I brought two guys with me.

I'm going to bring Ronnie Hamilton and Win Case with me off of my Middle Tennessee staff. Greg Gensing is going to be the interim coach at Middle Tennessee. He is interviewing for the job that I left. I'm going to have a process of interviewing all the guys that are on the current staff. I know all of them. We'll do a national search also for the third full-time spot.

The one thing that Ross has done, he has given us the means to go out and hire as good a staff as anybody in the SEC. We're going to do it. But I feel great with our guys here.

Q. Murfreesboro is somewhere you've been for over a decade and a half. At what point did you know this was the right step to take?

KERMIT DAVIS: As the process goes on, when I met with Chancellor Vitter and Ross, it was just one of those things that I knew it was the right place for me. Like I said up there, I wanted to align myself with leadership that I trust and then obviously a leadership that is committed. They're all in with Ole Miss basketball.

The infrastructure is there. Obviously the things that I feel about coming home to Mississippi, being in the Southeastern Conference, it was all just a perfect fit for me.

Q. Ross handed you the red blazer. Any timeline when you're going to try it on?

KERMIT DAVIS: I'll wear it my first game next year. I'll wear it out, I promise you that. I think it will fit, but I'll wear that thing proudly. It will be real soon.

Q. Now that you had that game yesterday, you've done this introductory thing today, how would you describe the past 24 hours?

KERMIT DAVIS: Like I said, it was emotional. Louisville played great. I was so proud of our team and what we did throughout the year. Then you leave that and you ride home, you kind of reflect on that bus ride. You get up this morning, start packing. You start thinking about the players here.

It has been a 24 hours of great energy, but just mentally a lot of different emotions go through.

Q. I don't want to belabor the point about constructing the roster, but how do you approach that when you don't necessarily know if there's attrition?

KERMIT DAVIS: That's just the ball juggling of new jobs. Everybody goes through it. I don't care if you're a new SEC football coach, new basketball coach at Middle Tennessee, Ole Miss. It's just the landscape of it.

We've talked to all the signees in the fall. They feel very good. We're going to go see Zach Naylor in Florida and also go see his mom. Those are things that that's just part of the process. There's no easy things in transition. There's no givens.

But we're going to take our time. We're not going to rush into things and sign guys that we don't think fit here. We're going to take our time, do our due diligence with the guys that are here and the guys who signed in the fall.

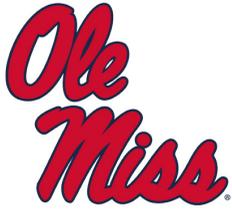
Q. Some believe this is a hard place to bring talent into Ole Miss. What is your assessment of that? Do you see obstacles?

KERMIT DAVIS: This is not recruiting talk. I'm just talking about a guy that's watched this. How is it difficult here? You play in the best basketball league in America. This is an unbelievable place, maybe the best college town in all of sports in America. You have the nicest arena, the Tuohy Center. I'm in heaven.

We're carrying a big bat in recruiting. A lot of people in the SEC have them too, but I think we've got an experience that you can really, really sell.

Q. Did you ever wonder if this day would come? You talked about building a national brand. These kinds of jobs always seemed to elude you a little bit. Did you ever give up hope you'd get to this place?

KERMIT DAVIS: I don't mean this egotistically, but I didn't chase a lot of stuff. You talk to my president and AD at Middle Tennessee. I mean, I'm telling you guys, I felt great where I was. I felt comfortable. Maybe like Bob McKillop at Davidson, Rick Byrd at Belmont, Mark Few...

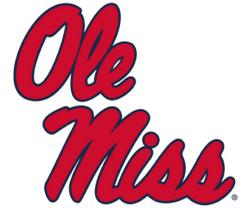


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I felt good. When this opportunity happened here, I just think it fit. When I started having conversations with Ross, talking to Keith, Chancellor Vitter, I just knew this was the opportunity I hoped they would offer me, and they did.

Q. How much of a factor was it, you said the life of the mid-major, how much of that was a factor getting to a Power 5 conference?

KERMIT DAVIS: The thought process goes through your mind. Our fans ask me and our media ask me the day of Selection Sunday, 'When your team didn't get in, everybody thought we'd get in, is that when you told Ole Miss?'

No, it's a process. But it does go through your mind. In 2012, we should have got in, we didn't. In 2014 we won our regular season championship and didn't even go to the NIT. Then this year, we thought we did everything right.

I just think that everything is in place here.