

March 5, 2010



Tennessee – 76
Ole Miss – 51

An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We have with us Tennessee head Coach Pat Summitt. We'll take an opening comment from Coach Summitt, then take questions for the players, and then take questions for Coach Summitt.

COACH SUMMITT: Obviously, this is the third time we played Ole Miss. I thought we did the best job defensively. In the other two games, I wasn't as poised. I thought tonight I thought we were much more committed to closing out long and defending the three ball.

Obviously we played a lot of players. We had some great possessions and we had some ugly possessions. We got to be more efficient. I think our team understands that.

But overall a great win. It's hard to beat a team three times. I think we came ready to do that tonight.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Alyssia, you had a big scoring day. What do you attribute your scoring production to? Why do you think you've become such a big scorer?

ALYSSIA BREWER: I mean, I think it's been some of the confidence factor, having confidence in my shot. Also as a team, whenever we start moving, it opens different shots for each of us. I think we did a good job of that tonight.

Q. Alicia, could you talk about the team's defense against Thomas.

ALICIA MANNING: Thomas is a great player. She uses her screens really well. It makes it difficult to guard. And she has so many different calibers of her game. She can drive, shoot.

Our defense, we were really focusing on limiting her touches, keeping a hand in her face at all times, getting in her shooting rhythm so she couldn't get her shots off. I think we did a pretty good job of doing that.

Q. Alicia, you have a nose for the ball. Every time the ball would pop into your hands. How do you explain that?

ALICIA MANNING: I guess I just kind of watch how the ball bounces off. You can tell if it's going towards the left side, it's most likely going to bounce off to the right. Just reading how the ball hits.

Q. Could you address the physical nature of the game. Seemed to be a lot of contact out there. Also you seemed to hurt your finger when you were going up in the first half.

ALICIA MANNING: It's fine. I just kind of got it tangled up.

You know, Ole Miss is a really aggressive team. We just had to match that, try to be more aggressive than them. So, yeah, there's going to be fouls that you like and don't like, but you just got to stay focused on the game and stay in the present.

ALYSSIA BREWER: I mean, it's been tough for us for a lot of games. The SEC is a

tough conference, difficult battles practically every single night. You just take it how it comes to you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll release the student-athletes. Questions for Coach Summitt.

Q. It seemed like the game was getting a little too physical there for a while. Does that concern you from maybe the injury factor?

COACH SUMMITT: Well, it was a physical game. Seeing that as a coach, coaching staff, you don't want anyone to get hurt in those conditions.

But I think both teams were very aggressive and played really, really tough on the screens and all their actions. So it was a very physical game, I thought more so in the second half than the first half.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH SUMMITT: Well, I think it worked to our advantage because we had talked about, you know, the first two times that we played them, we didn't do a great job at all on the three ball. Defended it better this afternoon than we have at any other time.

I mean, at their place, it was like we were giving up, you know, 20 threes, and, you know, coming back to Knoxville we gave up a lot of threes.

Coming here, we were committed to defending the three ball. I thought we had more success today than in the first two outings.

Obviously, they played a game yesterday. So, you know, that again was an advantage for us.

Q. You said after the last Ole Miss game you were looking for a sense of urgency. In the first half you saw that. Going forward, how nice was that to see?

COACH SUMMITT: It was great to see us coming out and having the level of commitment on the defensive end. We did a better job on the boards. I think they understood by looking statistically at the last two games that we really needed to be a great defensive team this afternoon, a lot better.

Q. How much does it help the team motivation-wise when you look out there and see that much orange? I only saw a little pocket of Ole Miss fans on the side. Does it give your team a lift?

COACH SUMMITT: Well, there's no doubt. I mean, fortunately our fans travel with us. They go on the road. They're passionate. They're

very invested. They know the team. They know the coaches. I'm sure they know all the sets that we run.

No, our fans are tremendous. Over the years, we've continued to build a fan base. We have people come from all over the country. It's really neat. It's something we don't ever want to take for granted.

Joan Cronan is out here. She can tell you that we've recruited a lot of people, too, to come in and be a part of our program in a lot of different ways.

Q. Pat, any reason why you can't get this performance and effort from Brewer from here on out?

COACH SUMMITT: Well, that's up to Brewer. You know, I can kind of try to motivate her a little bit. But I think she is motivated. I think she's really at a good place with her post game. Just has done a great job of understanding not only the post game, but she's becoming a better defender for us in the paint.

I think that helps to have Kelly and Alyssia. And Brewer, obviously her athleticism, she came in and did some good things. With Alyssia, she's very invested in helping this team win. You can see it, you can hear it. I'm very pleased with that.

Q. Players have come on for you in the second half. If they hadn't done that, your team would be in a much different position.

COACH SUMMITT: I think they've stepped up. I think Taber Spani stepped up. You know, you can look at what Alicia has done. Yes, she got in the gym and went to work, and that's made a big difference. I think Alyssia, she's got a good feel for the game with her back to the basket.

But those two have been very efficient for us, which has really helped us. I think that takes a lot of pressure off of our perimeter game when we can get inside and get results.

Q. What's the tradition now as far as looking ahead to your next opponent? Will you watch here? Will you watch on TV? Do you watch as a team?

COACH SUMMITT: I think our team will come back and watch. I'll probably go watch. I won't be in the audience. I'll go back and watch from the hotel, but my staff will be here watching.

Q. Looked like Manning was hitting the shot from the baseline today. Seems like right now the only flaw in her game is when she drives. She doesn't seem to have the same shooting touch as she does other times. Have you noticed that?

COACH SUMMITT: Well, I think when she's attacking the paint, sometimes she's a little bit out of control. But she's got a good pull-up game I think. She's got to have composure when she goes in there facing defenders. That's sometimes when she'll get the shot blocked or be a little hesitant.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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THE MODERATOR: We now have Ole Miss head Coach Renee Ladner and student-athletes. Coach, if you could make an opening comment.

COACH LADNER: Tennessee was outstanding today. They dominated everything that we tried to do in the first half, in particular the boards. Tennessee is Tennessee because they prepare so well and they play at a different level once tournament time starts around.

I'm just sorry we didn't give them a better game. All in all, we fought till the end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. For both players. Having played yesterday, you don't have as much depth as Tennessee does, did you think that was a factor? You played them close the first two times you played them.

BIANCA THOMAS: Fatigue is always going to be a factor when you play back-to-back games. That's not an excuse. I don't think we came out and gave Tennessee our best effort tonight. Have to credit them because they played great tonight.

KAYLA MELSON: Fatigue is not a factor and depth is not a factor. You know, our coach always says it's about who wants it more. I think tonight Tennessee came out and wanted it more than us. You have to give credit to that because they prepared.

I think that we just weren't able to counter what they threw at us tonight.

Q. Alicia Manning is a player that's come on for Tennessee in the second half of the season. Just as an all-around player rebounding and scoring, she plays good defense. Are you aware of her? Does she stick out in your preparation when you're playing against her?

BIANCA THOMAS: We're definitely aware of her. The last time in Knoxville, she got a double double on us. She's playing really well right now. She's their rogue player. She picks up the trash, plays good defense. She does all the small things for Tennessee.

So we definitely recognize her.

KAYLA MELSON: I think we do recognize her. She was the X factor in the loss when we lost at Oxford. She was the X factor when we played them at Tennessee. Of course we were aware of her. But give credit to her, because she's been playing really well these last couple games.

Q. (No microphone.)

KAYLA MELSON: Um, my ankles have been tweaked since I've been here. I mean, sprained both ankles numerous times. You know, this time was kind of different for me because I felt something that I usually don't feel. Thank God, it wasn't that serious and I was still able to play for my team.

Q. Would you describe it as a mild sprain?

KAYLA MELSON: I'd describe it as a mild

sprain.

Q. Coach, same question I asked the players. I know they have a lot of talent. Is Manning a player you take note of being a factor with them?

COACH LADNER: Alicia Manning has kicked our butt both times we played them. We were well aware of her. She's had a double double. She's outmanned us, out-hustled and beat us on the board. Alicia Manning was somebody we took to heart.

Once again she came in today and got a double double. She is getting better every time I see her play, in particular against us.

You know they have the bigs, the perimeter players. But she is a hustler. She makes plays for Tennessee. Kayla keeps calling her the X factor. She has been our nemesis. She has beaten us every time we've played.

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