

GAME PREVIEW

TODAY'S MATCHUP: VANDERBILT (18-13) vs. MISS. STATE (24-6)



SCOUTING THE BULLDOGS

- The Bulldogs closed out a successful regular season with three straight wins, beating Ole Miss, Vanderbilt and Alabama.
- Mississippi State is putting together an impressive statistical season. The Bulldogs rank fifth in the nation in turnover margin (+6.9), sixth in offensive rebounds (18.0 per game), 12th in turnovers forced (21.4 per game), 22nd in defense (allowing 54.4 ppg) and 20th in free throws made (426).
- Mississippi State sophomore Victoria Vivans is the SEC's second-leading scorer, averaging 16.7 points per game, and is shooting 38.3 percent from the floor, which ranks ninth in the conference. She also ranks third in 3-point percentage (30.3) and eighth in steals (1.9)
- Sophomore Morgan Williams is second in the SEC in assists (5.1 apg) and second in free throw percentage at 84.6.

SERIES HISTORY

- Today's game marks the 54th all-time match-up between the teams, with Vanderbilt owning a 36-17 lead in the series.
- This is the second matchup between the teams in less than two weeks. The Bulldogs beat Vanderbilt 66-61 on Feb. 25 in Nashville to spoil the Commodores' Senior Night.
- The teams last meet in the SEC Tournament in 2012, when Vanderbilt beat the Bulldogs, 67-51, in Nashville.
- During her time at Vanderbilt, head coach Melanie Balcomb has gone 12-8 against the Bulldogs.
- The teams split a pair of games last year, with Vanderbilt posting a 78-62 in Nashville on Jan. 10 to end MSU's season-opening 18-game winning streak, and the Bulldogs rolling to 69-44 win over the Commodores in Starkville less than three weeks later (more on those games below).
- The Commodores have gone 33-10 against Mississippi State since the 1982-83 season after going just 3-7 against the Bulldogs prior to that season.

HEAD COACH VIC SCHAEFER

Vic Schaefer, a veteran coach of 31 seasons, is in his third year at the helm of the Bulldogs. He guided the team to a record-setting 2014-15 campaign -- capped by MSU's first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2010 -- and earned SEC Coach of the Year honors from the Associated Press and co-Coach of the Year accolades from his SEC peers.

Last year's squad set school records for overall wins (27) and SEC victories (11). State also matched its highest-ever SEC finish (3rd place) while breaking into the national polls for the first time since 2010. Mississippi State stayed in the polls for 17 straight weeks, the second-longest tenure in program history, en route to finishing a program-best No. 12 in the final AP poll.

The 2014-15 season also saw the Bulldogs set a school record with 18 straight wins to open the year before the streak ended with a loss to Vanderbilt.

TEAM COMPARISONS

	<u>VAN</u>	<u>MSU</u>
Points Per Game	63.0	71.5
Pts Allowed Per Game	56.2	54.4
FG Percentage	46.3	40.5
3-Point FG-FGA	171-462	149-497
3-Point Percentage	37.0	30.0
3-pointers Per Game	5.5	5.0
FT-FTA	347-491	426-583
FT Percentage	70.9	73.1
Rebounds per game	32.7	40.6
Rebound margin	+4.5	+6.1
Assists Per Game	13.8	14.0
Turnovers Per Game	17.7	14.5
Turnover Margin	-1.1	+6.9
RPI (as of 3/3/16)	71	28
Strength of Schedule (3/3/16)	34	76

Note: RPI and Strength of Schedule among the 349 D-I programs.

MOST RECENT MEETING: MISS. STATE 66, VANDERBILT 61

Feb. 25, 2016 • Nashville, Tenn.

Continuing a challenging late-season stretch, Vanderbilt fell to No. 16 Mississippi State, 66-61, on Senior Night at Memorial Gym on Feb. 25. It was the eighth consecutive loss for the Commodores, who were playing their fifth straight game against a ranked opponent.

Mississippi State's Victoria Vivans, the SEC's second-leading scorer, finished with 21 points for the Bulldogs. Rachel Bell led Vanderbilt with 14 points and Marqu'e Webb had 11 points and seven rebounds.

Vanderbilt trailed by as many as 16 points in the second half, but used a late push to trim the deficit to 58-55 after a 3-pointer by Rebekah Dahlman with 33 seconds remaining in the game. But Mississippi State's Morgan William made four consecutive free throws to push the Bulldogs' lead out to 62-55 with 24 seconds left, and the Commodores were unable to get closer than five points from there.

Vanderbilt senior Morgan Batey had 12 points and four rebounds in the loss. Christa Reed added 11 points for the Commodores, who converted 21-of-25 attempts (84 percent) from the foul line. Webb was 9-of-10 from the line.

Plagued by cold shooting, the Commodores fell behind 14-3 in the first 6½ minutes of the game. Vivans hit a pair of 3-pointers to fuel MSU's early run.

Vanderbilt, however, used gritty defense and some good work at the foul line to chip away at the deficit and trailed just 31-25 at the break.

Mississippi State opened the second half with a 15-5 run to take a 46-30 lead on a layup by Breanna Richardson with 4:15 left in the third quarter but again the Commodores responded. They closed the deficit to seven points early in the fourth quarter and eventually pulled within 58-55 on Dahlman's 3-pointer with 33 seconds to play. Mississippi State, however, fended off the Commodores by converting eight free throws in the final 24 seconds.