

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

SMU Mustangs

Coach Adia Barnes

Kyla Deck

Tyi Skinner

Women's Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2025 ACC Tipoff Q&A. I'm happy to have SMU with me on the stage. Head Coach Adia Barnes, Tyi Skinner, as well as Kyla Deck.

Welcome. Obviously, a new chapter in SMU women's basketball. You welcoming a new coaching staff and 14 new players, 12 of those being transfers, plus three freshmen.

Have you had any sleep?

ADIA BARNES: No. No, but it's been great. I think it's great to have the challenge of building something new from a clean slate, a new start, new energy. So I'm just ecstatic about it.

THE MODERATOR: One advantage you have is that eight of those new faces are veterans, graduates, or seniors. Can you talk about how that experience factor was maybe important to you and your staff as you went into radio recruiting for SMU?

ADIA BARNES: It's really import, because I think nowadays it's very hard to be freshmen. I think there's very few freshmen around the country that can be direct impactful kids in a program.

I think there's a lot of value with a returning player that's been under different coaches, like Tyi and Kyla, they've been in different programs, they've done things different ways. They have success and proven success at this level. I think that's essential nowadays.

THE MODERATOR: We know what the style of play was at Arizona. What should ACC fans expect from this SMU ball club?

ADIA BARNES: They should expect a fun team that's tough. You know, I was a tough player, so I'm definitely a tough coach. I think that tough in a sense, like, Luca. I'm not that tough. They all say I'm not that tough. But tough like in a sense of you're going to have fun; you're going to dive for balls; you're going to have each other's backs; you're going to smile. You see they smile a lot. She smiles more than Kyla, but they both smile a lot.

You're supposed to have fun. You do what you love, and you have fun with it. A style that we're going to play good basketball. We do a good job as coaches and we're organized. I think, you know, it's funny. I look at this team and our personnel and our strengths. We're going to shoot a lot more threes than probably I've ever shot. I'm not like a 27 three-point shooting team per game. They don't like to post up. They love to shoot. We're going to see a lot more threes than I ever could have imagined.

TYI SKINNER: Don't give them the game plan.

ADIA BARNES: I know. Okay. Not 27 though. I'll tell you that. They love to shoot the three. I'm like, dang. But they can shoot really well.

THE MODERATOR: Adia, you've been a defensive-minded coach and offense has fed off of that. Should we expect more of that?

ADIA BARNES: Oh, a defensive minded coach. I'm really not. I love the offense and defense, but with the personnel I have, who I could recruit, I could always manufacture points off of defense with our personnel because we always had athletes.

When we're great defensively, we're really good offensively. I think you'll see us dictate on defense, but not 50-points a game. I don't think that's a fun style of basketball. Create off defense to make easy scoring opportunities, but I think you're going to see some damn good offense.

THE MODERATOR: Tyi, I got to ask this. Interstate rivals - Arizona State-Arizona - for multiple years, and now you go to play for Adia. Was there anything that was, like, oh,



this is not who I thought you were since she's been your head coach? Kind of talk us through that recruiting process.

TYI SKINNER: Well, yeah, we was rivals, but I didn't think she was going to be as funny. I was surprised how funny Adia was. I laugh at her a lot.

ADIA BARNES: They say I clock. Whatever that mean. They say I'm a clocker.

TYI SKINNER: Yeah, we've been clocking teams. We been learning her clocking, and --

THE MODERATOR: I'm not cooling. Can you tell me what clocking is.

TYI SKINNER: Kyla, tell her what clocking is.

KYLA DECK: It's basically calling somebody out on something.

ADIA BARNES: I'm like, I'm clocking.

TYI SKINNER: During the process it was really exciting just talking to her, getting to know her. I feel like when I first met her she had a lot of confidence. She didn't know that I'm a fan of basketball. I already knew who she was prior to watching her national championship stint.

I already admired her from afar. I thought she was the person I thought she was going to be. She's confident. Yeah, confident. I want a coach that's confident, even borderline cocky. Yeah, and believe in me. I thought the process was good. We got along really well.

ADIA BARNES: A fun story too. I'll make it quick. Just a month ago she told me she still had some videos.

TYI SKINNER: Oh, yeah.

ADIA BARNES: After the press conference when we played against ASU a couple of times, she always would kill us. We would trap her. We would do all these things. She would always score really well, score 25 points.

After the games, I didn't remember this, but I guess I said good things about her, and she had, like, two press conferences. I read them. It brought a tear to my eye. I said good things about her as a competitor, and she had those. I thought that was really special, like awww.

THE MODERATOR: Are you keeping those in case you get in the doghouse?

TYI SKINNER: No, no. I knew who she was before. She already had a great player that's at a place that I want to be at in the future, and I do look at that like as that's inspiration a little bit.

Yeah, I kept the press conference because I was, like, Dad, I just played against Adia Barnes, the one with the girl that went to the league. I'm, like, That's what she said. So I said to my dad, and I had it since then, and I showed her.

ADIA BARNES: That was special. I didn't know that.

THE MODERATOR: Kyla, who is tougher to take the ball away from, you or your pit bull?

KYLA DECK: Definitely my pit bull. She's got a strong little grip on her.

THE MODERATOR: Everyone is new to this. You've now gone against Tyi in practice. Describe her game.

KYLA DECK: It's funny, because my freshman year we played Arizona State. I remember her actually, playing against her, but I was pretty young, so it was a long time ago.

Going against her in practice, she's a dog. Her skill set is really good. Like, she sees the floor really well. That's something that I look up to her. Her vision, how she passes the ball, how she shoots, how she makes her reads is something you can learn from.

It's good for me because I get to play defense against that, and I feel like if I can guard Tyi, I can guard anybody in the league.

THE MODERATOR: Tyi, one of the things I came upon when I was preparing for these few days, you're the first person in your family to receive a college degree. Congratulations, first of all.

TYI SKINNER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Can you talk about maybe how that has inspired you throughout this process of college athletics? What does your mom say about all of this?

TYI SKINNER: Shout-out to my mom. She's really excited. She's more proud than I am about accomplishing a degree. She really wanted me to do it.

I think when I was going through the process -- because I'm still in the process, so it's kind of hard to realize your accomplishments as you're going through it, because I've always had one goal, and I'm still focused on that goal.

I think just looking back at the few things that I have accomplished, it's just a blessing really. I just thank God every day.

Like I said, my mom, my family, they're really proud of me. They think I already made it. I haven't even accomplished my dream yet. But they're, like, you made it. I think they're really proud of me.

THE MODERATOR: Tyi, one thing that makes you great is you are always striving for more. That's what I'm hearing from you.

TYI SKINNER: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Adia, as you are transitioning into the ACC, has there been a coach that's reached out to you or that's just been trying to help you through this process as you come into your third new conference in three years?

ADIA BARNES: No. No, I don't say it like that. No, but I think at this level, I think that we're all competitors. I did reach out to Shawn, who was actually one of my teammates years ago, and just asked about -- and I have known Amaka, so I asked about the ACC.

I think that at this level, we all compete against each other. We're fierce competitors, and I think that it's just different now. I think if I was maybe 25 years old and hadn't been somewhere else, probably, but I think it's just different as you mature and get older and change conferences.

THE MODERATOR: Tyi, I hear you like to cook.

TYI SKINNER: Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: What's the go-to meal?

TYI SKINNER: I'm very simple. I like nachos a lot. I will say nachos, steak, and salmon. I cook that a lot.

ADIA BARNES: She loves seafood boil.

TYI SKINNER: No stop, stop.

ADIA BARNES: She probably spends \$200 a week. Thank God for rev share money. I'm always, like, Tyi, on seafood boil. That's Tyi's thing.

THE MODERATOR: Just for yourself or is this for the team?

TYI SKINNER: I invite them. You're welcome to bring your own seafood boil.

ADIA BARNES: She can't be paying for the team.

THE MODERATOR: You know there's a business side to this, like you can start charging.

TYI SKINNER: I know. So anybody who wants to sign an NIL business, please I will be your best advocate, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Kyla, who is the one teammate who you think maybe no one knows about right now that a couple of weeks or a month in everyone is going to be talking about?

KYLA DECK: Zahra King. She's a sophomore. She just transferred from Cal. She's a little young, so she's obviously going to have to gain some experience, but the type of game she has, like, she's very hard to guard. She works hard. She has a great attitude.

It's not something ever in practice we're, like, come on, Zahra. No, she always has a good attitude. She's always practicing her hardest. I think she's going to be a real tough cookie.

ADIA BARNES: She fits our system really well. I think style of play is really important. She's athletic, so she can press and play defense and shoot the three. She's going to be a really, really good player for us. I think she will surprise some people.

THE MODERATOR: Last question for you guys, and I know this is all new, but you've heard enough, and you are at SMU now. When I say this, give me a one-word answer for each of you. Kyla, we'll start with you. ACC women's basketball, what's the one word that comes to mind?

KYLA DECK: Gritty.

TYI SKINNER: Guards.

KYLA DECK: That too.

ADIA BARNES: I think elite. One of the reasons why I say elite is because I think there's very few conferences that are very high academic and very good athletics. So I think that when you have both, and we did have that at the Pac-12.

I think that's what made the Pac-12 a conference of champions years ago. They had great academics in amazing cities and great athletics. I think having two of those things, it's special. There's a lot of top conferences that they just don't have that. I think also leadership. We have a tremendous leader, and I think that's one of the

things that is going to separate the ACC from other leagues. I think it's really going to explode this year.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much. SMU, good luck this season.

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