

# Penn State University Basketball Media Conference

Monday, March 23, 2026

University Park, Pennsylvania, USA

## Dr. Patrick Kraft Coach Tanisha Wright

### Press Conference

**PATRICK KRAFT:** All right, good to see everybody. Great afternoon to be here. Great day for Penn State athletics, Lady Lion basketball.

Today is a little bit more than just introducing a coach, a new coach to our Lady Lions basketball program. Today is about bringing one of our own home, reconnecting our proud past with our ever stronger future.

Today is about welcoming back one of the fiercest competitors and most respected leaders to ever wear the blue and white, one Miss Coach Tanisha Wright.

Tanisha is Penn State Lady Lion basketball. She's parts of an era defined by excellence: Big10 Championships, NCAA tournament runs, national recognition, and a reputation for toughness that became the identity of Lady Lion basketball.

She didn't just play here. She helped define what winning looks like as a Penn State Lady Lion basketball player. Now she comes back to start the next chapter. When you talk to Tanisha, one thing becomes clear very quickly: This place matters to her. This is personal. She.

Knows what it means to wear a Penn State uniform. She understand the responsibility that comes with it, the hard work, the sacrifice, and the standard, because she lived it.

Her resume speaks for itself: All-American, WNBA champion, WNBA Coach the Year, nearly two decades at the highest levels of basketball. A respected head coach and a developer of talent. It wasn't just that impressive resume that is why she's here. It's more importantly who she is. Her passion for mentorship, her belief in building strong women, not just strong players, her commitment to excellence in the classroom, the community, and in the quiet moments when nobody is watching.



She talks about the impact this University had on her life, how giving back shaped her. How being part of something bigger than yourself defines the Penn State experience.

Tanisha is not just coming back to coach basketball. She's coming back to lead, to inspire, and to raise the standard. She wants to build this program that honors its championship past while fearlessly pursuing what comes next.

Over the past few weeks I've had the great pleasure to hear the deep respect that people across the basketball world have for her, not just as a coach, but as a person. That confirmed something I already believed in: She the right leader at the right time.

Today is a great day for every Lady Lion who helped build this program. Today is a great day for alums, students, our fans, and everyone who believes in what this program can become again.

And most importantly, this day a filled with momentum. Tandra, welcome to Happy Valley, amazing community and support system. And Tanisha, welcome home. Please join me in welcoming the head coach of the Lady Lion basketball program, Tanisha Wright.

**TANISHA WRIGHT:** Good afternoon. First I would like to thank Pat, President Neeli for entrusting me with such an incredible opportunity. I would like to thank the Penn State community for such a warm welcome back. The energy has been amazing. The Lady Lion Club, Lady Lion Cager Club for their continued support of the Lady Lion program.

I would like to thank all the coaches, alum, players, teammates, who contributed to the Lady Lion legacy. A special thanks to Rene Portland for taking a chance on me and opening the door for the opportunity to sit where I'm sitting, my family who continue to support me in all things that I do, and lastly, God for the continuing favor upon me.

I am incredibly honored to be the next head coach of the Lady Lion program. With so much history of success, Big10 Championships, conference titles, NCAA appearances, Penn State has been known to compete at the highest level.



Like so many before me and others after me, this place has been a special place in all our hearts. The alumni base across all sports is hands down the best in the country.

Pat's vision for Penn State athletics is what drew me to this opportunity to be here today. I am so grateful for Pat and the opportunity to he has presented for me to be here.

I have stayed close to the program throughout the years and I couldn't be more thrilled to restore the excellence that this program has experienced over the last 60 years, while continuing to add to the long lasting Lady Lion legacy.

This is a dream come true for me. After being gone for 20 years, never could have imagined sitting in front of you today as the new head coach.

What I can promise is that I will give my all, I will fight, and I will continue to represent Penn State in a way that we know Penn State should be represented.

So thank you, and I'm excited to be back.

**Q. When weighing the options to take this job or not, what stood out to you as the main reason to come back to your alma mater at this stage in your coaching career?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, great question. Like I said earlier, I think Pat's vision for Penn State athletics is something that really drew me to wanting to be back. I think what we're seeing around Penn State athletics, all the success at all the different programs, we had women's hockey, men's hockey, women's volleyball, what's happening with football, different things like that it's really what drew me.

And then the opportunity to stand here as the head coach of a program that I played for, that I bled for, given so much to and that has given so much to me; to be able to impact young athletes in a positive way. That's something that really showed itself throughout the process and said this was the right time to be here.

**Q. When you were head coach in Atlanta, you obviously had a brief tender there, what did you learn that you can apply at the college level and that you think can help this program?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, great question. I think throughout my time as the coach at the Dream, what I've learned is how important it is to really build those relationships, how important it is to really dive in and allow

the athletes to know how important they are as people and not just players.

And so I think that's something that at the collegiate level I'll be able to bring that I definitely learned there. And then it's more than just a game. You have to impact players. They have to know you believe in them and care about them, and then when they do that, their effort in how they show up and produce is a lot better for sure.

**Q. Obviously the era that the sport is in right now, NIL, roster attention never been more pressing or challenging than ever. How do you try and attack that at this place where recruiting historically has been a challenge? How do you go about that, and do you feel like you have the resources here to succeed?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Of course I feel like I have the resources here to succeed. I wouldn't have took the job if I didn't think so. I'm in a unique position being that I come from pros. We look at the collegiate landscape now and it's sort of heading that way in terms of the NIL and different things like that.

So I think my experiences with being in pro, dealing with roster management, dealing with contracts, dealing with agents, building those relationships, positions me to be able to handle the landscape that is happening now.

I think historically Penn State has done a good job of are he recruiting. Now it's a matter of getting back to some of those old ways and figuring out how we can go tackle those things.

I'm excited about that. I don't see it as an challenge. I see it as an opportunity to rebuild a program that has already set things on fire.

We need to get back to that, and I am looking forward to getting in the weeds and being able to do that.

**Q. Welcome back.**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Thank you.

**Q. How do you go about handling the recruiting piece of this? Obviously talent acquisition is much different at this level than it is -- well, I guess maybe it's not quite as much. There are differences.**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah.

**Q. I guess you could say. How do you go about doing that and building your staff?**



TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, great question. To answer the first part of your question, it's building a great staff. It's building people around me that are great at what they do. That's the first part, being collaborative in what we want to do, having that vision, creating that vision and going to tackle players and student-athletes that match that vision.

I think that's one way we're going to go about recruiting. We are going to bring in players that understand the Penn State way and that are committed to the Penn State way, and then we're going to go from there.

**Q. As far as the current and future Lady Lions, I know a lot of the them will have aspirations to make the W. What goes into develop them not only at the collegiate level, but also knowing that they have bigger aspirations to follow in your footsteps and make it to the best league in the world?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, great question. I think it's a step by step, day by day process. When you see pro players, they didn't get there overnight. They took one day at a time, 1% better, and I think that's the approach we'll have to take moving forward. Just one day at a time and getting better every time we step on the court, not just on the court but off the court developing young ladies as people just as much as athletes.

**Q. When you were announced as the new head coach the WNBA was skill working on the collective bargaining agreement up until I guess the day after you were announced. How did that uncertainty with the WNBA in your previous role impact your decision to come to Penn State?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: It didn't. That had nothing to do with my decision to be here. I'm here at Penn State because this is an amazing opportunity and I get an chance to impact and influence young athletes and I get a chance to impact a program that has meant so much to me, has given so much to me.

I really believe in to who much is given, much is required, and this community, the Penn State community, the program has given so much to me, so I look forward to be able to pay it forward and give back to it in the same way it gave to me.

**Q. Welcome back.**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Thank you.

**Q. Timeline question: You talked about this being a dream job. When did it become a reality for you, like how many weeks ago did this become a reality of**

**something you could aspire to? And on the other end of the timeline, what's realistic for a Tanisha Wright team to have a winning record and make the tournament?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, I can't make you any promises in terms of timeline. Just like I said, just said it, it takes time. My goal is to step in and do that one day at a time, building it back up. We know that this place has success because we've seen it. There is a blueprint for it.

So not veering too far off the path. Attack the blueprint and build it up one day at a time. Didn't happen overnight when I was here, didn't happen overnight when Susan Robinson was here. It took time. So that's the plan, to build it up step by step, day by day.

We're going to put the energy and the effort in, and we are going to rebuild the program back to what we know it to be.

As far as dream job, any time you get a chance to coach your alma mater I think you're always -- you know what I mean, that's always in the back of your mind. When Pat called and we started to have those conversations after the season, it was something that became a reality, that I could coach my alma mater, coach at Penn State.

So for me, I'm just, again, extremely grateful and thankful for the opportunity to stand here. I do not take this lightly. I know this is going to be a fun job. It won't be without its challenges, but we're going to have a good time doing it.

**Q. You mentioned the community a question ago. Saw you at the hockey game, men's lacrosse. What has it been like to be back and getting out in the community in this role?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: The reception has been amazing. The energy around me being back, everything is, welcome back, welcome back, glad to see, happy to see you, welcome home.

That's what Penn State is. Penn State is home. Anybody that's ever played here, my teammates who some of them are here can tell you, this place always holds a special place in our hearts.

It will always be home to anybody that has been in the Penn State environment and really engulfed themselves in this. Just like that, everybody here has been happy to see me and a lot energy around it.

So I'm excited. I can't wait to get out in the community and build that support and fan base and support other sports around the Penn State community.



**Q. Penn State obviously has a strong player group. Stars like Kiyomi McMiller, Gracie Merkle. You talked about hitting the transfer portal and getting some new talent.**

TANISHA WRIGHT: I didn't talk about that. I didn't say that at all.

**Q. How do you utilize both the transfer portal and retaining some of that talent you have?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, right now it's early, so my job is to evaluate, and I'll do that over the next few weeks. I'll evaluate and assess what the situation is and then go from there.

So right now, that's what I'm focused on. So I'm not going to give you any promises on how we're going to go about it, but evaluating and then assessing where we need to go and making the necessary decisions based upon that.

**Q. I know you got a lot of memories in Rec Hall doing a lot of great things. I know the women's teams has played in both Rec Hall and Bryce Jordan Center. Curious your thoughts about where the women's team plays most of their home games.**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Yeah, listen, I'm excited. Again, I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to get out in the community and really get the fan base. So our job is to get butts in the seats. That's it. Fill the stands up. Create that environment that, again, we have all seen here at Penn State. We know it to be, it's out there. There is a blueprint for it. Butts in the seats is the focus.

Please come out and support.

**Q. On the note of the current roster, most of them still have eligibility left. The transfer portal opens in two weeks. Have you gotten a chance to speak to any of the players and what balance do you think you need to strike with player retention and the transfer portal?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Again, right now I'm five days on the job, so I am evaluating everything and anything that needs to be evaluated in terms of the Lady Lion program.

So like I said before, after I'm done evaluating then we'll make necessary decisions. Right now it's just an evaluation period. Even though this is home, I'm like the new kid on the block. Nobody in the neighborhood is the same people in the neighborhood. It's just time for me to sit back and evaluate the things I need to and assess from there.

**Q. What's your message to fans, to people about this next coming season?**

TANISHA WRIGHT: Thanks. Great question. My message to fans is you guys have been amazing, at least throughout the time that I've been at Penn State. I know there is so many of you who want to see this program back to where it has been in the past, and so we're looking to rebuild that and we know we have to build trust in that.

Come out and support as we rebuild that back up. I think the Lady Lion athletes deserve that. When they come here and put on they deserve that support, so come out. Butts in the seats. Let's build this thing back together.

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