

Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Rutgers Scarlet Knights

Women's Head Coach

Coquese Washington



KEVIN WARREN: Our next coach to the stage has a great history and tradition with the Big Ten, formerly coaches at Penn State University. She's passionate about Play for Kay, which has helped raise funds for women who are battling cancer. A great player. A great coach. We are so excited to have Coquese Washington as the head basketball coach at Rutgers University. I know she's going to do great things. It's good to have her back in the Big Ten family.

Welcome to the stage Coach Washington from Rutgers University.

COQUESE WASHINGTON: Good morning. Thanks for such a wonderful turnout this morning for Big Ten Media Day. I'm really excited and thrilled to be back in the Big Ten. Looking forward to the competition in our conference and really being a part of the premier athletic conference in the country.

We've got tremendous leadership with Kevin Warren and the rest of the Big Ten staff as well as the campus leadership across the conference. It's really exciting to be back in the conference. Looking forward to big things in the conference.

So I'll take your questions now.

Q. At least one time this season there will be a Big Ten game with two head coaches on either side that's black. Are we coming closer to that being a rule, not an exception, in your opinion?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: That's a great question.

I think it will be exciting when that happens. But obviously I think there's still a lot of room for growth when you look at the numbers in terms of diversity, in terms of people of color leading programs, especially in the Power Five conferences.

We certainly have had some movement in the last couple years. We've had some good hires. There's still a lot of

work to be done in that area. It's up to our administrations to cast a broad and wide net when they have hiring opportunities to ensure that our head coaching ranks are reflective of what our players look like and where they're from and the diversity with that respect.

I think we've done well, but there's still room for growth and opportunity there.

Q. You're taking over for an icon. What will a Coquese Washington Rutgers team look like?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: Well, I think one thing that I always admired and respected about Coach Stringer was as much what she did off the court as she did on the court, how she cared for her players, how she challenged and nurtured and grew her players.

A Rutgers women's basketball team will still be reflective of that even though there's been a change of leadership.

Our style of play may be a little bit different.

Q. How?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: Coach Stringer was known for great defense and low-scoring games. I kind of like to score a few more points, so the pace may be a little bit different (smiling). The styles may be a little bit different.

But I think the thing that will remain constant and consistent is the pursuit of excellence, the pursuit of championships, and loving and caring and nurturing our players off the court in a way that's authentic and truly a positive representation of Rutgers athletics and Rutgers University.

Q. You just alluded to it a little bit about the game plan. At Rutgers, there's a pedigree of winning, as you well know. You know this league quite well. When you think about how you differentiate, how you find the separation of Rutgers women's basketball to then end up with the results that you want, what does that entail?



COQUESE WASHINGTON: Well, it's not really so much about trying to differentiate ourselves or looking and comparing ourselves to what Maryland is doing or Nebraska or even Minnesota. It's really about establishing our culture, who we are, how we play. Those things are where we talk with our team right now.

We're in discovery mode, right? We're discovering who we are. Actually, as a staff and as a program, we've all been together since September with 1, a little over a month. So we're still in discovery mode.

It's about laying the foundation of who we want to be. Our style of play, we like to play fast, we like to get up and down the court. That's obviously where the game is going.

As we work to establish our identity and set ourselves up for long-term sustained success, it's not about winning a few games this year but it's about being a program that's going to be a stalwart in the Big Ten Conference. That's going to take some time and dedication to laying and building a strong foundation.

Q. Having been in the Big Ten, the fact that you really had to rebuild this thing from down deep, how helpful has it been to have that Big Ten experience? You put together quite a coaching staff in its own right. Talk about your hires a little bit.

COQUESE WASHINGTON: Yeah, definitely think the experience that I have previously of coaching in this conference is going to be helpful. When you know how Brenda Frese likes to coach, Kevin McGuff at Ohio State likes to coach, Teri Moren, how she likes to coach, that's certainly helpful. It definitely will give us an opportunity to understand the conference better.

Again, it goes back to us being able to put together a team, put together a program, and build and create a foundation this year that's going to allow and provide for long-term success in this conference.

The talent base in this conference is really deep. When you look at the number of players that were drafted this past year in the WNBA, when you look at the players that are coming in that have such a high buzz nationally coming back, it's a very competitive conference. That competitive nature is what's going to make our program better and what's going to make our conference strong as we head into NCAA play in March.

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