

Big Ten Basketball Media Days

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Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Michigan State Spartans

Women's Head Coach

Suzy Merchant



KEVIN WARREN: The next basketball coach to the podium is from Michigan State University, Suzy Merchant. Coach Merchant has done so much in the community, she's created the empowHER retreat, which has been designed and been very successful in building confidence in young women by providing interactive workshops, which concentrate on the importance of self-empowerment, confidence, health, wellness and relationship building.

She also in 2019 was invited by the current Michigan governor, Gretchen Whitmer, to serve as advisory member on the Michigan Task Force for Women in Sports, which is dedicated to developing policies, programs and recommended investments to promote and support opportunities for young women and girls in the state of Michigan.

Coach Merchant is an iconic basketball coach. Has been very successful. We are truly honored and blessed to have Suzy Merchant in the Big Ten.

I'd like to welcome the head women's basketball coach at Michigan State University, Coach Suzy Merchant.

SUZY MERCHANT: Hello. Is it morning? Sorry, good morning. Thank you for that introduction. I don't know if iconic means I'm old. Does that mean I'm old (smiling)? I don't know.

Really, Kevin, thank you for your kind words. I want to thank you so much for your leadership, particularly in women's basketball. It is the 50th anniversary of Title IX. Since your inception here, the team you've put today with Diana Sabau and Megan Kahn, your commitment to women's basketball, we truly appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Exciting to be here in Minneapolis. I was saying to Kevin over there that Aerial Powers, who played for me, is a Minnesota Lynx player. A year ago I brought Nia Clouden, who was our first round pick last year, up here to watch a game. The energy in that building, the feeling of true avid women's basketball fans was really unique.

I've been in a lot of venues. But this town loves its basketball. What I love about it, this town really loves its women's basketball. We're excited for the Big Ten tournament and looking forward to a new venue.

My team. Who did I bring with me here today? I brought DeeDee Hagemann and Matilda Ekh, who were on the All-Freshmen team last year, really significant players for us last year; I brought Taiyier Parks, our anchor inside, as our center; and one of our transfers in Kamaria McDaniel.

All those kids that are here with me today will be very impactful for us this year.

Last year was an interesting year for us. Being a point guard, it was the first time I've had to learn to play with three and four post players at a time due to our injuries. So the best news for us is we're healthy. I lost three starters all at the perimeter position last year. Those kids are back with the inception of what we have coming back with our injured kids.

Then we've added three impactful transfers in Kamaria McDaniel. When she was here in the Big Ten, she was second in the Big Ten in scoring. Was a First Team All-Conference player, top 15 in the country scorer in general.

We've added Gabby Elliott, who was on the All-Freshmen team at Clemson, a Detroit native, someone we recruited pretty hard out of high school as well. She was second in scoring in the ACC on her team at Clemson. Just over 13 a game. A stat sheet stuffer, I would say. She can score it. She rebounds it, assists, steals.

The third transfer we've added we're really excited about. She's originally from Sweden. We have that connection with Matilda. She's from Stephen F. Austin. She was a three-time All-Defensive performer and a four-time First Team All-Conference performer as well and led their team in scoring.

The three impact transfers that we have have really done a great job at their previous institutions. All have a



connection to Michigan State. Two are Detroiters, and one is connected to Matilda. They were the right transfers. We just didn't take transfers, we took a few kids that we really feel like fit Michigan State.

With who we have coming back, we're very excited about this season ahead.

I'll be happy to take any questions you might have. Again, thank you all for being here. Appreciate it.

Q. You mentioned Powers and Clouden who just competed for a WNBA title with the Connecticut Sun. What is it about your program that gets players pro-ready in particular?

SUZY MERCHANT: Well, I think one thing I'd like to say is they do a lot of the work themselves. We as coaches would love to take the credit.

Izzo says this all the time: Do you like it, do you live it, or do you live it? Those are three different things.

Kids that go to the league live it. It is a fabric of who they are. Credit certainly goes to them.

I also think the one thing we've been able to do as coaches is really highlight their versatility. Aerial played a lot of four for me, but also some three. If you watch her play, those are hybrid kids that are hard to find.

Nia was a true point guard. We moved a little bit to the 2 later in her career, which I think helped her become a better scorer and think without the ball in her hands and move without the ball in her hands.

I think most of the credit goes to them. I think also the versatility piece we've been able to accomplish with them shows the next level that they'll be next-level ready.

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