

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Kansas City, Missouri, USA

TCU Horned Frogs

Coach Jamie Dixon

Media Day Press Conference



JAMIE DIXON: Thanks for having us, and good to see everybody today. As far as our group, it's like everybody, a lot of new players, but it is the way of college basketball.

We've embraced it, enjoy it. Like being a part of getting together in June and putting everybody -- getting together and trying to put a team together. It's fun. We get to experiment, try some things out in the summer and get better.

We've had, I'd say, 70 days together. Got Arkansas coming up here in an exhibition game, so we'll see what we look like there, and then we open up on November 4. Exhibition game is November 1.

As far as our group, two experienced guards that are transfers in. Those are the guys that stand out. I think they're here today, that you were able to talk to them in Noah and Frankie Collins, and then Ernest was here, so he's the returning big guy for us.

Really the five forwards are interesting. I like all five of them. They're all new, a couple transfers, guys that redshirted for us. And granted, we lost some very good players at those spots last year, but we replace them with some very good ones and exciting ones this year, five of them really. I think we'll be fine there.

We've got a lot of work to do. Like I said, we did some experimenting, tried out new things. And obviously we have whole new players. We have to adapt to them I think is more so what we're doing nowadays than recruiting guys, getting them to fit into a program. They're going to have them maybe not four, the five we had them when I was at Pitt and TCU initially.

It's a change, but it's fun. It's exciting. I really like our group. I think we shoot it better than we have in the past. We're still trying to run and lead the country in fast break points.

We've done that the last two years, so that hasn't changed. We're going to continue to push and score in transition, be the fastest playing team, fly up and down the floor.

Then on the defensive end we've got to be better. We've got to be better defensively to get to the top of the league, and we've made that commitment. So we've got to fly around defensively, be more aggressive, and continue to force turnovers, continue to rebound.

But we've got to have teams shoot a lower percentage. Gave up too many lay-ups or higher percentage shots last year and we've got to cut that down. We've made it very clear to our guys.

But excited about our group.

Q. The last couple of seasons you've had one of the oldest teams in the league. This year you've got a really young team. How does that change your approach to the season?

JAMIE DIXON: Yeah, that was a decision that was made. We had five guys earn masters degrees last year in our program.

We kind of -- I think the rules had something to do with that. We saw the year -- we figured there was going to be one more year where that transfers, still a year to sit out. So we took some transfers the year before knowing they couldn't go, they'd be locked in for a year, and then moved on from there.

We knew we'd be young this year. We had two guys redshirting as freshmen, then we bring in four new freshmen. Yeah, some of that has to do with, honestly, monetarily, financially where you're at, and what you have to do, and then we felt there would be some guards that we could bring in as experienced guys.

We've really targeted a couple different guys and come up with two really good ones with experience, but we're going to play some young guys at those other spots.

That's part of this.

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Our whole thing is get old, stay old. That's what we did at Pitt for years. I would say people oftentimes would try to make fun of us or say that, but it was because we retained players. Kids didn't transfer. They didn't leave us. They liked what we were doing. They grew.

And now we're in a whole different world where they can like you a whole lot, but they're going to look at what the best opportunity is, and obviously one important reason, but other reasons, too.

I think we're a little younger. Not usually the recipe for success, but I think we've got younger mature guys. The four freshmen we brought in are a little bit more physically, and I hope mentally, ready than your typical freshmen.

Micah fits that. I think Punch certainly fits that, David Punch, and Malick to a degree. He got an ACL and that put us behind a little bit, and the two freshmen are older in Jace Posey and Isaiah Manning.

We've got six freshmen on the roster. There's no question about it, we are younger. Obviously I think that's why -- I think we have 2 percent returning of scoring. Yeah, I can see why we're picked a little bit lower.

But I think we can surprise some people.

Q. You talked a little bit about identifying the strengths of your group and then you also talked about the kind of core identity that TCU basketball has had over the last few years. What are some of the strengths of this group specifically, and how do you blend what they're capable of doing with what you want to do on the court?

JAMIE DIXON: Yeah, I mean, a lot of -- those six new guys are going to have something to do with that. They're younger. We do want to run. We want to continue to be the fastest playing team as far as scoring in transition. We want to continue that.

We've got to become more physical defensively. Everybody looks at us as a physical team because of our rebound numbers and I guess our past teams maybe at Pittsburgh, and we are. We are. But we're in the best league, the most physical league, and so we've got to take it up a notch to get better.

This league is -- Houston was the best team and they were the most physical team last year, and we're trying to get that message across. Kansas is always physical.

We have to become more physical without fouling, and we

have to figure that out, and that's what we're here to do.

That's the process that we're in right now, and we're not there yet. We haven't figured it out. But we're going to continue to work on it.

November 4th is coming very quickly. We need to be ready. But that's what we really need to incorporate here going forward.

Q. You mentioned Ernest Udeh. He's your only returning starter from last season. How important is it to have a guy like him back on the roster this year kind of as a leader to the younger guys?

JAMIE DIXON: Yeah, interesting, he obviously played at Kansas. I guess that's why you're bringing him up. Didn't play much at all. So really this is the first year -- I looked at his high school career and his playing in the circuit, AAU. He wasn't a big producer as far as -- we need more production out of him, there's no question.

He played, started every game for us that he played last year. He got hurt at the end of the year which hurt us. Missed five, six games down the stretch; hurt us a lot.

But he's such a great kid. Everybody loves him on campus. He's so fun to be around. Teammates love him. He's so unselfish. Really we need him to be a little bit more selfish in a couple things, and the offensive end is one of those things, scoring around the basket. That's a good thing.

He's such a great human being. He's outgoing, energetic, people love him on campus, and he just represents our program so well.

We need more out of him, though, simply put. For us to be better and be that more physical team -- we were surprised how big, how physical, how he looks, but how he was not playing physical enough for us last year.

We have to have him more physical without fouling and be as physical as the Houstons, the Kansases are. You get knocked around when you play against those teams without fouling, and that's what we have to get to be.

Q. Coach Campbell was here yesterday, talked about the same things you talked about just in terms of wanting to play as fast as possible, get up and down the floor and maximize possessions. Do you two compare notes at all when it comes to basketball?

JAMIE DIXON: You know, it's funny, I recruited him out of high school, actually college, junior college and high

school. So I've known him for a long time. And then he worked at St. Mary's, so we've a lot of history prior to. He worked at Hawai'i; I coached at Hawai'i. He played at Hawai'i, I should say, and then he coached at St. Mary's with Coach Bennett who was a dear friend of mine, a guy I grew up with in this coaching world.

So yeah, there's a lot of familiarity before he came there, and then we do talk hoops a lot. I think he played that way prior to -- I think he's still establishing. Obviously it's his first year and he's been a head coach four years.

But we do talk hand in hand, and I've always been very connected with the women's coach and the programs I've been at, so they've always been dear friends and close friends and people that we talk with, whether it be Coach Pebley who I was texting with yesterday, Coach Berenato who I saw two weeks ago as I go down and think about this.

Yeah, I think we have a lot of similarities. We had talked about doing something, I guess most teams in our conference have, the Noah shooting machine. He claims to be a shooter, I claim to be a shooter, so we wanted to both get that machinery, I guess, or technology in our -- we joked about it being any shooting apparatus we're all for.

The Noah, in case you guys are -- if you guys understand what I'm saying here. Mark is a great guy. We do talk basketball.

He's coming to a new school. We talked about challenges that we have, and then we have a facility that we have to share, and so a lot of things come into play. But we do have a lot of the same -- I think a lot of the same mentality or thoughts and concepts on the basketball court.

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