

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Houston Cougars

Coach Kelvin Sampson

Media Day Press Conference



KELVIN SAMPSON: How bored are you guys? You guys look like you're bored out of your skulls. You're always looking at your monitors or your phones. You don't even know I'm up here, do you? Nor do you care; let's be for real.

I've got a few more looking.

I don't think I'm any different than any other coach this time of year. Just anxious to play some scrimmages so you can evaluate your veteran guys' progress and get an eye on your young guys and see if they're picking things up, see if you can't get them some confidence and get them heading in the right direction.

But practices this time of year, just making sure you can go 5 on 5, making sure you've got enough to practice.

Q. What is the plan for Terrance Arceneaux coming back from his injury in terms of minutes on the court?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Yeah, we've got to watch that. We've got to watch that. ACLs are -- it wasn't that long ago when that was a 12-month recovery.

They'll clear him quicker now, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're ready to play in a game or go a full two-hour practice or do conditioning. Terrance is making good progress, but he's not 100 percent. But we're having to watch that.

Q. Tony Bennett is the latest top coach to retire. What is it that's kept you going and allowed you to adapt to this new era?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Well, I think all coaches have to evolve. The younger coaches that came in this generation, it's not new to them. I mean, they're not evolving from anything. They're born into it.

But for me, the guy that probably influenced me the most

my first couple years as a head coach in the Pac-10 was Ralph Miller. If you're a young journalist you probably never heard of him. He's been gone a long time. But he's one of the great, great coaches and teachers and builders of programs that our game has ever known. He really influenced me in a positive way.

I had a chance to tell him that, too.

But that was '87, '88, '89. Lute Olson, the great Lute Olson was at Arizona and Mike Montgomery, George Raveling. A lot has happened since then, a lot of years, and now I see all the young coaches in the Big 12.

But these guys are much better coaches today than I was. I don't know about some of the other guys, but certainly much better than I was. They're better equipped. They have better backgrounds. They have better experience.

My best teacher was mistakes, and I made enough for everybody.

I just think being able to evolve, change, realizing -- I think when you live your life from a foundation of humility, that means that what you do is not always right. There might be a better way. Just being humble about those things.

The way that I used to do it probably wouldn't work today. I had to have enough humility to understand that, that the game is way bigger than I am.

When my time is up and I walk away, the game is not going to miss me, but that's part of getting over yourself. The game will miss certain guys, but they're certainly not going to miss me.

This game has given me far more than I could ever give it. I enjoy teaching. I enjoy coaching. I enjoy mentoring. I enjoy trying to make a difference in our kids' lives. I enjoy that.

I refuse to let NIL or transfer portal penetrate my joy. I keep my joy -- I still love doing that. I don't spend my time worrying about NIL. I'm not thinking about it. We deal with it, obviously.

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I think guys recruit other coaches' players probably more than their own sometimes. We're a living example of that. But all our kids came back, and I appreciate that.

Our staff and our culture and our program have a lot to do with that. The NIL stuff is what it is. It is what it is.

But my job has not changed because I will not let it change.

Q. A lot of coaches today who are newcoming have talked about the physicality of the Big 12. What do you think those coaches and teams can learn from how you guys immediately adapted to the physicality of the Big 12 coming in last year?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I have no idea. I have no idea what they can learn. I'm not them. You'd have to ask them that.

Q. You were in this league in the mid '90s. 30 years later you're in the league. It was always strong, always has been, but there's an argument to be made it's now stronger than ever with five teams in the top 10 of the preseason AP poll. What have you seen when you look at this conference as it's evolved over the decades?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I don't know that it's much different at the top. When Roy was at Kansas, Coach Sutton was at Oklahoma State, Rick was at Texas, and Oklahoma -- we were all in the Final Four a year apart.

I think Kansas -- the year we went in '02, Kansas went the same year. The next year it was Texas. I think the year before, I might be wrong, but I think the first one to go was Coach Sutton and the Cowboys.

So we were all playing each other then. Those were tough games. Norm Stewart -- I don't know if a lot of these young coaches know what a great program Missouri had. I still have nightmares about the O'Heron Center. That place was a tough place to play.

Coach Stewart was one of the great coaches this conference has ever had, and then Quinn after him.

I remember we beat them one year to go to the Final Four. Coach Knight at Texas Tech. I remember the first year they had that beautiful arena they have.

The league was always tough, but there's a need for everybody to compare; is it better now than it was then. The top, probably about the same. There were some teams in the league then that you could beat because they

were rebuilding. They didn't have the resources we have now.

Our league should be better now than it was then. That was in -- not that you can age a guy that's got white hair, but I was in the Big 8. What is he still doing coaching? But I coached in the old Big 8. There was just eight of us.

Then when the four Texas schools came in, we all didn't have a level playing field. Some programs were better funded, better supported. Their fan bases were great. Some were not.

Now that's the difference. The fan bases. The arenas. The atmospheres.

I remember going to media day in 1988 at the LAX Marriott. It didn't look like this. Look how media days have changed. Look how many people is here now. I remember they would put us at a table. Of course nobody ever came to our table. They always went to Lute's table or Jim Harrick's table.

But the game has changed. Of course the league has changed. The league should be better. Everything about college basketball is better today.

For the traditionalist, it will never be the same. We didn't have NIL back then. There was no transfer portal.

I can imagine some of those old coaches are rolling in their grave if they'd told them that kids not only can transfer but they can transfer inside the league.

They would go crazy. What's the new rule? Okay, let's go. Let's adapt and move on; that's kind of the way you have to look at it now.

It's been fun to watch -- coming back into the Big 12, going to the different arenas and seeing the improvements and how great the fan bases are. But I remember going to old Bramlage. That place was loud back then, too. People said, well, what's the difference in Allen Fieldhouse? Nothing. It hasn't changed. We couldn't beat them in the '90s, 2000s; we can't beat them today. They still have a crazy fan base.

We played at Texas last year. Everybody has got great fan bases. There's just some better than others.

Q. If new BYU coach Kevin Young who's coming out of the NBA as an assistant approached you for advice because you've done the same thing, although you've coached obviously in college before, what would you tell him to be ready for?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Just coach his team. Last year that was my narrative. I never, ever bought into coaching in the Big 12.

We had lost four starters from the year before, so I was more interested and concerned about replacing the four starters. But I've always had -- I don't know if it's unique, but I've always had the ability to focus on what's in front of me.

I think our first game last year was West Virginia at home. We got ready for West Virginia at home. Whoever was next, next. My narrative was not the Big 12. My narrative is coaching my team. That's the only advice I'd give anybody.

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