

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Georgia Bulldogs

Katie Abrahamson-Henderson

Women's Media Day Press Conference

Q. What is the culture that you would like to bring to Georgia?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: It's a broad question, culture. I think since I've been a head coach, our culture is to really empower women. That's the culture. In terms of basketball, just continue on the winning tradition at Georgia that was there and is there and what I played for.

Just continue winning is pretty much the basis.

Q. I know you played for Georgia; what's it mean to come back and to continue on that legacy?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yeah, I mean, honored is the biggest thing. I mean, I feel very honored to be back at Georgia. Obviously when I played -- well, it's not obvious. I played with Katrina McClain, Teresa Edwards, Lisa O'Connor, Carla Williams. I played with some really, really phenomenal players, and just all the hard work and the culture we built back then, I feel very honored to be leading the program and being a part of the culture moving forward.

Q. Coming back to Georgia, you talk about the teams; what about Coach Landers? How much is he helping you, or how much are you telling him, I've got this, Coach?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Neither. I think we've been in contact for years. You all know Coach Landers; he is one of the funniest people you'll ever meet, and he's just so charismatic.

He honestly is a blessing because I've taken over some programs with some really, really good coaches, and they've all been really helpful to me, but he really backs off and does his own thing.

Once in a while he'll call me, and then I'll go speak



somewhere and he'll call me and say, Hey, I heard you were here. Some days he'll call me, we'll just talk about -- obviously I'm not going to tell you what we talk about, but we just talk about all the little things, or sometimes I'll call him.

He is going to be a tremendous resource for me. Just the way he built this program and how he did things, his vision of how he looks at it may be a little different from the outside in, where he used to be the inside out and now he's looking on the outside in.

For me being on the inside of the program, sometimes we'll go to lunch and laugh a lot, and then he'll ask me some -- he knows what he's looking for in the answer, but he'll ask me the question because he knows the answer he wants to hear. He's super smart.

I can't wait to have him come to games. And I know he doesn't want to come to games because he wants to just back off and let it be my program, but I'm going to want to get some feedback from him for sure.

He was actually just there yesterday, and he's super awesome, and I'm like, Come to practice. He's like, No, no, no. I'm like, Come to practice, come in. He was like, No, I don't want to come into practice.

And then he came into practice just for a second, and of course I was like, Go in and introduce yourself, because I'm really big on the players knowing what the culture is. The culture is him.

They all went over and talked to him. They know who he is, but they all went and talked to him and reminded him who everybody was. Obviously he knows some of the players. Just having him around brings a whole different energy to the program.

Q. I know this team has gone through quite a bit of turnover, so kind of two parts to this question. First, what's it mean having so many folks follow you from UCF? What's that say about Georgia, your relationship with players, and also how are you dealing with turnovers from decommits as well as transfers?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yeah, I feel like



everything has been a blessing. To be honest, I don't look at anything in any kind of good, bad, negative. I feel like coming into the program -- let's just talk about the portal. The portal is like a whole different thing.

I think that for the portal this year for coach or coaches was a blessing because we got to bring in culture kids and we got to bring in kids that are going to play the style and the way we want to play, whereas when I took over some other programs and rebuilt those programs, there wasn't a portal.

So we morphed with how we were going to coach with the players and the style of athleticism or non-athleticism or they were shooters and we had a lot of post players or we had a lot of guards.

Coming into Georgia, we could kind of hand-pick the culture and do we need a 1, do we need a 2, do we need a 3, do we need a post. It was a lot of fun. It was like putting a puzzle together and bringing in our culture and our brand.

Q. How quickly did you reach out to Diamond after you took the job? What does it mean and what does she bring to the floor not just to the culture and knowing what you expect?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yeah, I didn't reach out to Diamond. We got the job, and when you get a new job, you have to know what you have at the new job before you can even think about what's next to come.

So it took a while for, number one -- Diamond, her whole family is right there in Florida, and I was never going to do that to her family in terms of one way or the other. So we got to Georgia. We really evaluated what we had at Georgia first, who was going to stay, what the transfer portal looked like, and we really went into the transfer portal really quick for -- Kari Niblack was in the transfer portal, Audrey Warren was in the transfer portal at that time, and De'Mauri Flournoy was in the transfer portal. So we were going after them really fast because we had some relationship with those kids, and they were already in the portal before I even got the job at Georgia. That's kind of where we started.

Then we were kind of waiting and seeing how many Georgia players wanted to stay at Georgia and play for Coach Abe and her staff's culture. We kind of did it like that.

Diamond and some of the UCF players, they had to make some decisions about their futures because I want people happy. I don't want people not happy playing for me.

So I think everything just kind of evolved, and it happened

really naturally. It really did. We're blessed to have the young people that we have on our team.

We're really, to be honest, post heavy. We're probably the only school in the country that has a lot of post players, more than just two.

We have really a good blend of posts, guards, point guards. We've got a mix of a lot of different types of players.

Q. I'm always curious about people who return to coach at their alma mater. Was this a hope for you, or can you just not think about that in your career as you're going on and you've gone from a couple of head coaching jobs to another? Was that something in the back of your mind?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I never thought Coach Landers was ever going to retire. Why? He's a Hall of Fame coach. And when he did, I was at Albany at the time, and it was in my head, but then I'm like, you know what? Whatever is meant to be is meant to be. I'm just that type. I was winning at Albany. And I loved Albany and I loved our players and just everything about it.

Then Coach Taylor got the job, and I wished her well, and Carla Green was AD at the time, and she was one of my teammates at Georgia. We had talked a little bit, and then we won our championship this year at Georgia and we went to the NCAA Tournament, and I don't think anybody knew that this job was going to open up. So I didn't even know, and then came back from the NCAA Tournament, and the next day a lot of phone calls were coming in, and I was like, whoa, I might be leaving this culture I just built at UCF.

It was a really, really hard decision for me because I really loved UCF and I loved the administration and I loved everything about the place, and I had a lot of opportunities to go a lot of different places. It's just Georgia is very special to me in terms of I played there, and obviously Andy Landers.

Q. UGA has such a rich history of grit and defense. Where do you fit into that?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: That's who I am pretty much. I mean, I really think that that's kind of why it happened the way it happened. Everybody says, Abe, you're a defensive coach, and I'm like, Actually I'm not really. I'm like an offensive crazy person. I think of offense all the time. But I know that defense wins championships. If you look at any NCAA Tournament, men's and women's basketball, they're winning games because of defense and



not winning games because everybody jacks up threes. Nobody does that. So it's defense that wins games.

We just have to learn how to do both. We play a little different style, but anybody that we recruit has to be athletic, has to be tough, has to have grit. It's kind of my personality a little bit.

So we try to recruit kids that want to play fast paced and actually are willing to work and move their bodies in the sense of a lot of running and a lot of -- pressing is really, really hard. So you've got to be willing to put in the work to be able to do that.

But we are definitely going to be gritty. We are definitely going to be tough. Definitely defense is going to be something always about us because we want to win.

Q. You talked about your culture always being to empower women. I asked Malury and she said those exact same words. That's got to make you feel good, that you've had that kind of impression on her so quickly?

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I know, I got goosebumps when you said that and looked around to try to find her. Yeah, it does. Besides one of my coaches who wanted to be a college coach since she was seven -- like who wants to do that.

I didn't get into this business to coach. I got into this business to empower women because I was raised by an empowering woman, a single mom who raised four kids and saying, "I am woman, hear me roar" every single day. I just think that's my journey, and through basketball I can empower women.

I'm not just empowering women, I'm empowering people. That's something that I think has kind of been my journey really.

My husband and I talk about it a lot; I feel like if we've done a really good coaching job if our players ask us to come back, if our players come back and see us all the time, if our players ask us to come to their weddings, if our players ask us to be involved with their families after basketball, if they're staying in contact. I think that's a great coach.

That means that my staff and I, we've empowered people to be great people and love us no matter what. Winning obviously helps and it's fun, but I think that because we teach women how to empower themselves and empower each other and empower their team, I think winning comes with that.