

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Auburn Tigers

Johnnie Harris

Women's Media Day Press Conference

Q. Going into your second season with the Tigers, what things do you think that you can do to help raise the floor of the team? You had some pretty high highs last year. What things do you think you can do to raise that floor?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: I feel like we addressed that in the summer, in the postseason and in the summer, and in the preseason we had to get bigger, faster, stronger. I feel like we addressed it in recruiting. I had to get some depth.

Yeah, mostly bigger, faster, stronger. We're teaching our kids to finish. We're trying to get smarter on the floor with having some players that played for us last year. We have a little bit of leadership there, so all of that will play a part in helping us.

Q. Your two ladies that you brought with you today were talking about there's an underdog mentality with this team, and you can see it in the spirit of getting some of those big wins last season. How do you hope that that translates into a full season where you can make sure you're not having to call yourselves underdogs anymore?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: Yeah, just having them consistent in practice. Our practices, try to make our practices harder. They're more competitive now, now that we have more bodies, now that we have better talent. It's more competitive.

So just that consistency, starting in practice, I think it'll carry over into games.

Q. I wanted to have you talk about the atmosphere that Auburn could bring, particularly in the basketball setting. How do you expect that to have an impact on your program's results this season?



JOHNNIE HARRIS: I think it will be very good for us. We've just sold more season tickets than in the history of Auburn women's basketball, and I think that's big for us. Our players have been out.

We have the Jungle, which is our student sections, and our students have been very supportive. I really believe that the atmosphere will help us, especially having a young team, because we're still a very young team. I have eight players that didn't suit up for us last year.

But I just think that atmosphere will help get us over the top.

Q. You had some huge wins last year over superior teams in the rankings at least. How does that translate to get your team to play better, game after game after game, and how do you teach that?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: You know, we go back, it's what we do. We play hard. We pressure the ball. We try to get people to do things that they're uncomfortable doing, and that's what we were able to do in those games. So we go back and watch those films.

Like I said, we try to be consistent. We try to be consistent. We have more bodies. Last year we were leaning on basically two players. We have more now.

I think they weren't built for it. Like I said, we had to get bigger, faster, stronger. They had to, as well. I think with all of that put together, it will help us going forward.

Q. You also have a host of newcomers coming into the team. How have you kind of leaned on the returning players to kind of bring them in and bring them into the culture that you're trying to build here at Auburn?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: You know, just showing them what they need -- I have three former players who are -- they're really competitive, three former players that's on my staff, and they're really competitive, and sometimes they get out there with them, and they just show them what it really looks like.

I think by the time our freshmen came in, our returners



knew what we expected day in and day out.

They did, they want to win. Those kids want to win. They got a taste of what it looked like. I remember the first win we got in Auburn arena, I honestly told a reporter, this is what I want for our fans. I want to see our fans this happy.

Just going to work, doing it for themselves, but also doing it for the fans of Auburn.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about recruiting internationally and what that adds to your team?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: Yeah, it's big, because I was not -- I had to sign a lot of players, but I had to sign players that fit.

I do have some connections internationally. I've always had at least one on my team. This year we'll have three. I have two right now, and I have one coming in in December.

But yes, they're physical, they're aggressive. They fit our style, style of play, and I just think it'll help raise our level of play in the SEC.

Q. Talk about the impact of having a player like Honesty. I know she told a reporter a certain quote in a previous game, but talk about the impact of having a player like her?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: You know, Honesty, she's a very unselfish player. She averaged 13 points, I can't remember how many rebounds, but she's always in there. She was guarding the best player. She'll pass up a good shot for a great shot, and a lot of players like Honesty wouldn't do that.

I think she's exactly the kind of player that you want when you're building a program because you can put her at different spots. She doesn't complain about having to play point or having to play 2 or having to guard the other team's best player. She's very impactful, and she's very important to this program.

Q. Just to follow up, Akinbolawa Oyindamola, I want to confirm, is she definitely coming in in December?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: Yes, she is coming in. She had some issues with getting to the embassy, but she got all that straight. She has her visa and she's all signed up, and she'll be here I believe December 14.

Q. Can you talk about what it's been like to have Coach Fred join your staff this season?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: It's been amazing. Just his knowledge, his wisdom, his energy. He can coach on -- he's offensive or defensive. He is my defensive coordinator. But just having that knowledge, having somebody to lean on, to run things by, he's been great. He has a really good rapport with our kids. They trust him. They respect him, and our staff, as well.

He's a big part of what we will be doing going forward.

Q. Just with your history and experience at recruiting and now getting that chance as a head coach, we're seeing the landscape of sports change with NIL, and I want to know how do you see an emphasis on this being such a benefit for women's sports and especially for growing that brand of women's sports.

JOHNNIE HARRIS: Well, it is important, and you do see it's impactful in women's sports. It's here. We embrace it. We encourage our players to make themselves marketable, and we help them with that so that they can have those opportunities.

Like I said, it's here. It's part of our world now. For us, it's just embracing it and making sure our players are prepared.

Q. To add some more to that question, just how do you feel that creates maybe some equity? I know that it's still a battle with women's and men's sports and the attention, but do you have a hope that this one day would help with women and young women getting a chance to market themselves?

JOHNNIE HARRIS: Yeah, I definitely think that, and I think our players can be who they are. They can be feminine off the court, they can be monsters on the court, however they want to be. They can be themselves and still feel like they can benefit off of their name, image, and likeness. I really believe that it's important. It's important for women's basketball.

I think yes, growing the game, growing the game of women's basketball and not having to -- being able to -- I guess I'm trying to say being able to benefit off of just who they are is important for them.

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