

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

LSU Tigers

Kim Mulkey

Women's Media Day Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin our session with Coach Mulkey.

Q. I just want to follow up about the situation of your former player, Brittney Griner. I know that you have declined to comment in the past, but I want to check in today and see if there's anything that's changed on that and if you could talk a little bit maybe about why you have declined to comment and if anything has changed?

KIM MULKEY: Happy birthday to Brittney. I understand today is her birthday.

I commented on June 28th. Are you aware of that podcast? Okay. That podcast on June 28th I think pretty much answered all of your questions.

So if you would like, I think it's Tiger Rag, and I went on a podcast and spoke about it, and I feel the same way today that I did on June 28th. So go do a little research and look at it if you would.

You're welcome.

Q. You coached in a different league. Is the SEC much different than the other league?

KIM MULKEY: Yes (laughing). All leagues are good. All leagues have great players and great coaches, and I was blessed to coach in the Big 12 for 21 years at a great institution in Baylor. We won I don't know how many championships. Wonderful memories.

Now, coming to the SEC, while I'm familiar with the coaches, I don't really know that I've played against many of them until it was playoff time. Sometimes we would play non-conference games, but obviously, the conference is bigger. We have the national champion from last year in



our conference. It's challenging. Different styles of play.

But something that I embrace and am enjoying.

Q. Both players commented on the fact that obviously so many players come from so many different places, but they've been happy with the chemistry so far. Obviously, that's something that you never really know, but I heard you talk on the SEC podium about you want to bring in pieces. How has that worked out to your satisfaction so far?

KIM MULKEY: Well, Scott, we've only been at it three weeks. Maybe beginning of the fourth week. That's a concern that you have every year when you recruit freshmen to come to your program, and we brought in a lot of transfers. Then we have the returning players.

Our theme for the year is Piece it Two -- year two -- Twogether. We have talent, but can we all get on the same page?

We will at some point. You just don't know when. I have enjoyed coaching them. I think that progress is probably evaluated when you see that you don't have to repeat the same thing over and over and over, and I think we've done a lot in a short period of time with new players.

Q. Alexis Morris talked about the impact of having Angel Reese on the team this year. I wanted to know if you could share a little insight about that and having her on the team and what that means for this year?

KIM MULKEY: Yes, Angel Reese, I think everybody in women's basketball that covers it knows her history with the No. 2 recruit coming out of high school and how good she is.

I never coached against Angel Reese, but I can tell you after three weeks of watching her, she's a beast. I say that with the utmost respect. That beast is hard to defend.

You can't keep her off the offensive boards, and she's a leader vocally, simply from the fact that she just loves to compete. She hates to lose. That has been very obvious to me in the three to four weeks that I've been on the floor with her.



It doesn't surprise me that Alexis Morris talks highly about her, because all great perimeter players are really good when they've got somebody in that paint that people have to worry about.

Q. Alexis Morris, the impact that your team -- her injury last year had on your team going down the stretch and then also how she accepted the role of not being a point guard last year, she was talking a little bit about that today and how comfortable she feels being back in that role.

KIM MULKEY: You know, when Alexis went down, it was one of those situations that coaches kind of address in a different way. What I mean by that, I knew we were losing almost 17, 18 points a game heading to the playoffs. How do you make that up? You don't that late in the year.

So you are trying to get a high bid in the NCAA tournament, but I knew what she meant to our team. We needed those points. We needed that quickness on the floor.

Losing that really affected us. Alexis is completely healthy. She can play all three perimeter positions.

You think she's going to be our point guard, and I can tell you she's going to be, but also can tell you that if some of the other ones develop, she sure is pretty effective on the wing as well.

So Alexis is a young lady that has a story in itself, and that's the story you need to be writing, is about the young lady was dismissed from my team at Baylor, and she wanted to come back and play for me. We don't write enough of those stories. I think that speaks volumes to Alexis Morris's character.

Q. You've been dominant in this game for a long time. Can you talk a little bit about the growth of women's basketball that you have seen over the years, and specifically this year with the year of the transfer portal being so hot as well as also NIL being kind of at the top of what it's ever been?

KIM MULKEY: Are you trying to say I'm old? What's a long time? No, I'm teasing.

I have been. This is, gosh, my -- almost 40 years in this game. I started when I was 23 years of age, and I've seen a lot of things happen.

I've seen the evolution of parity. I think there's more parity in the women's game now.

Why? I don't think it's because you have more players to choose from. I think it's because of institutions committing resources to having good women's basketball, and I think they see the value. I don't mean the dollar value.

We all know that men's basketball is the cash cow, but when you can see an LSU in one year fill up a PMAC, you can't put a dollar value on what television brings to that institution.

I think it's just the parity is better, and I think the reason the parity is better is you are seeing more resources from each individual institution.

Q. I just wanted to touch on your tenure at LSU so far. You have been able to accomplish a lot throughout your career, but it's still only entering your second year here at LSU. What have you learned about yourself as a coach in your short time at LSU and in the SEC?

KIM MULKEY: I haven't changed as a coach. I think anybody that is in my inner circle will say I'm the same Kim Mulkey that I was at 14 years of age that I am at 60. Can I get it out? 60.

What you do as a coach is you continue to stay abreast. You don't become stagnant. You don't become lazy. You don't not change based upon your personnel.

I can't do some of the things with this upcoming team that maybe I did last year. I may not have been able to coach some of the schemes last year's team that I did with the last national championship team.

It's our job as coaches to put young people in positions to look good and to be successful. I have two new coaches on my staff that I'm really excited about, Bob Starkey, Coach Shaquille O'Neil, and on the men's side with Dale Brown, then he switched over to the women's side years later and he was there at LSU with Sue Gunter, who is a legendary coach.

And then I have Gary Redus, who I call him like a little recruiting machine. He is so excited when he starts talking about recruiting.

Then you add them to the coaches that came with me from Baylor, and I'm well taken care of because they do a lot of the work, and they need to receive more of the credit.

Q. What would it mean to win a national championship for LSU?

KIM MULKEY: That's kind of hard because I think LSU people need to answer that. I've won them both as a player, assistant coach and a head coach. I can answer for me personally.

You never get tired of winning national championships. No one championship means more than the other. What matters to me is that I would love for my players that have never won one to say, "I have a ring." That's what motivates me.

Now, as far as LSU, the bigger picture, the alums, the donors, I think the passion that LSU fans have is pretty obvious. I think it would just be great. I think it would be great for our community. I think it would be great for our state. We are the flagship state of Louisiana.

We have lots of people that come see us play and probably people that have never been to a women's basketball game before.

Why that would be? Probably because of me being a Louisiana kid. I grew up there. I went to school at Louisiana Tech. I come back home.

That interests probably people that have never been to an LSU women's game. I just know work. We're doing the same things at LSU that I did when I got to Baylor. Get out in the community. Be seen. Don't take no for an answer. Sell another ticket. Just be accessible.

That doesn't bother me. I'm not a coach that hides out. If you need me, I'll be there. I go places. I do things in the community that a lot of people don't know, don't care that they know.

So I hope I've answered that. I can't really answer for LSU, but I can answer for me as the coach.

Q. Last year you said: We're having a great year. We don't have a great program yet. We have to stack some years. Is the message to the team, hey, none of the 26 wins carry over? And you are also dealing with the aspect today of you're nationally ranked, which a year ago at this time -- you're No. 16 in the AP Poll today. That's new to be dealing with, right?

KIM MULKEY: Well, it is new for LSU women's basketball currently. LSU women's basketball, if you'll recall, they've been to Final Fours. They've had some of the greatest players to come through that program that stay in touch with us. Seimone Augustus, Sylvia Fowles.

Seimone Augustus is going to be the first female to have a statue right there. That should have been done long ago.

If people want to give me credit for that, so be it. It was on my radar when I got there: Why has that not been done.

We're going to love her when that is done. She comes to games. Sylvia is retired now, will come to games.

Back to what you said about sustaining a program, I think my remark was we haven't arrived yet. We're excited, and this is fun, and it gets the community involved, but have you to do it year after year after year. That's what we're trying to do.

So being ranked is not a big deal to me personally, but it is a big deal to our school. It's a big deal to our program because we're now being recognized. You want to be relevant. In order to be relevant, you have to do things consistently. You can't go up and down and up and down.

Q. You mentioned Bob Starkey. Have you ever known another coach to coach men's and then cross over to the women and be as good? Also, is it similar to when D-D Breaux got Jay Clark? You got a unicorn probably.

KIM MULKEY: Let me tell you about my knowledge about Bob Starkey before hiring him. It was from afar. It was respect from afar.

I had watched what he had done on the men's side, and I watched how he carried himself. I just watched a lot of little things. I never knew him personally other than to speak to him.

Then when I had the opportunity to hire him, ironically it was my secretary who had worked all those years for Sue Gunter, Pokey Chapman, and a bunch of people in the program. Nikki Fargas, she was their secretary.

I said to her, Do you know much about Bob Starkey?

Well, she's in love with him. Her husband and her and him and his wife, they go on vacations together.

I said, You have to be kidding me. I said, Do you think that he would come back to Baton Rouge and be interested in coming back to work here?

She said, His wife will divorce him if he doesn't because she loves Baton Rouge. Bob loves Baton Rouge.

The hardest phone call for me to make, which I didn't have to make -- coaches don't make anymore -- was to Johnnie Harris, who he was currently at the time working for at Auburn.

I said, Johnnie, I have an opening on my staff, and I would like to talk to Bob.

She said, you know, just like we all would, you don't want to lose him, but she allowed me to talk to him, and the rest is history.

To relate it to D-D Breaux and Jay, I can tell you D-D Breaux fought a lot of Title IX battles. The woman fought a lot of Title IX battles. I haven't had to fight those battles. Never in my life have I ever had to fight like a lot of women did. I am the recipient of a lot.

That doesn't mean I didn't have little battles. Getting kicked out of a dugout playing in the All-Star game with the boys, little things like that.

D-D Breaux and gymnastics and what they have done there, so I'm going to think a smart AD would let her pick and choose her replacement when she retires. That's what she did in Jay.

D-D is still around. You can't get rid of her. She's around as an ambassador. I see her at meetings. I'm, like, What are you doing, D-D? Get out of here. Go fish. Go see your grandkids. She's LSU through and through.

Q. You mentioned Gary Redus being added to your staff. What does he mean to your staff, not just as a recruiter, but his personality as a coach on your staff?

KIM MULKEY: You played, didn't you? I know who you are. I'm not too old remember seeing you play, and you're asking about Gary because he is an Alabama boy, but you're not going to get him to come to Alabama, right?

He is something else. When you talk about just pure energy and love and work ethic. I actually texted my staff yesterday because we're constantly waiting on commitments, right? It's that time of year. Signing date is in November.

My comment to the staff was this: Those of us who have been doing this a long time and those of us who have signed some of the greatest players don't ever lose the joy and excitement that you see in Gary Redus's eyes when he knows we're going to get a commitment. It's so pure, and it's so real, and it's so exciting, it almost brings a tear to your eye to watch him.

He just keeps me young. He keeps our staff laughing. He had to have lied to his wife to get somebody that beautiful to marry him. I haven't figured that out yet. Has two beautiful children.

He and Bob Starkey, they're special. My whole staff is special. They've been with me a long time, but these are our two new additions. Thank you.

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