

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Texas A&M Aggies

Joni Taylor

Women's Media Day Press Conference

Q. Coach Taylor, a couple things. Number one, are there any -- I know it's only been a few weeks, but is there anything that you feel like coming into the season you can say, I really like this about my team, and also, can you even have any idea of what to expect from this year?

JONI TAYLOR: Yeah. What I really like about our team is their commitment to wanting to be better. You talk about 12 players, 11 that can play for us this year, who are being asked to do something totally different than what they've done in the past, or if they're freshmen, something new.

Their commitment to wanting to do that and get that right is at a high level.

With that being said, we've got a long way to go. Every day for us, it's about what we're judging and our measurement is are we better today than we were yesterday, how much have we retained since we started in April until now, and can we see that carry over in that development.

What I like about our group is, again, we have a lot of options. There's a lot of versatility. There's people we can move around and put in different spots.

But before we can get to that point, we've got to get the basics and the disciplines down of how we want to play our style of play on both ends of the floor.

Q. Can you talk about coming to a new program and one that's also in the SEC, and can you speak about what that shows about the SEC generally?

JONI TAYLOR: Well, I was just talking to AP a little bit earlier. I am the SEC. I played in this league. I've coached in it for 15, 16 years now as an assistant coach and head coach. I can't imagine myself not being in the



SEC.

So when you talk about coming to College Station, there were only -- it's not a lot of options for me in terms of something that would get my attention.

Every time we would go to Reed Arena, come to College Station, the atmosphere, the culture, the tradition was always something that jumped out on the page. So when Ross and Kristen called and talked about the opportunity to possibly come and continue to enhance the tradition that Gary Blair set, but to get back to that championship level, it was something that intrigued us as a staff.

We sat there and really weighed our options, and after listening to their commitment to women's basketball and getting back to that level, it was a great opportunity for us.

Q. You've been in the SEC 11 years; are you trying to change your roster composition, or is it very different from your first year to now entering your 12th year?

JONI TAYLOR: Yeah, our roster will fit our style, so in terms of changing our roster, this is a league that's athletic, that's physical. You've got to have shooters and scorers and height. Versatility is something that we always look for in our roster.

That's the first thing that we'll do is continue to build our roster for future years in that way.

Right now, our roster has all those things, so I'm excited, again, about the opportunity we have with the versatility we have and the ability to move pieces around.

Q. Can you speak more about filling the shoes of the legendary Coach Blair? What does that mean for you and how has that been, and is there pressure to it?

JONI TAYLOR: I'll go last and backtrack. There's no pressure. I took over for Andy Landers, Hall of Famer, legend. I consider it an honor and a privilege to be considered to be someone who follows a legend.

For me, there's an expectation there and a standard and a responsibility, but isn't that what you want when you're stepping into a coaching role or a position of leadership?



You want to have those opportunities.

What is so great about Gary, and he and Andy share these similarities, is that they want what's best for women's basketball. When you talk to Gary Blair, he doesn't say Texas A&M was my program. He says it's Texas A&M women's basketball. Same thing when I was working for Andy, and it was this is Georgia women's basketball, not Andy Landers' program. I didn't do this, the players did.

That's what it's about; it's about our student-athletes because that's who we're there to serve.

For me, I want to make sure every day when I walk into that office I am upholding the legacy that Gary Blair and those former players, former students created and doing everything in our power as a staff to enhance that and take it to the next level.

Q. Joni, y'all beat Texas A&M fairly handily last year. My question is, if you'll share it with us, going into that game, kind of what was the book on A&M, and knowing that, how much has it helped you maybe begin to build that team back?

JONI TAYLOR: Well, I think that that's just our league. We're so familiar with each other. We can kind of go down that road with everyone. I think back to that game last year, we had more depth. We knew if we were going to go four quarters with them that we were going to hopefully be able to outlast them because of our versatility and our depth.

We had a distinct size advantage, and so it was about getting the ball inside and trying to get some fouls on Sydnee Roby and Patty and some of their bigs to get them out of the game. We were able to do that.

And then from there, just style of play. Who's going to win in terms of style of play, running it up and down the floor at a high level for four quarters, can they maintain that style with us.

So knowing that, that's what we're trying to do now. We're trying to teach our returners and our new players that style.

So it's completely different. Not right or wrong, it's just different. That's what's so beautiful about basketball; there's several ways to do it. It's just getting them to understand playing at that fast pace on both ends of the floor, defending at a high level, playing aggressive man-to-man, and some of the things that they're not used to doing.

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