

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Missouri Tigers

Robin Pingeton

Women's Media Day Press Conference

Q. Can you talk a little bit about your expectations for this coming season and what you want to see out of the team?

ROBIN PINGETON: Yeah, for sure. I probably should have said right when I came up, just appreciate you guys being here. Appreciate everything the SEC has done to put this together. It's been fun to see the other coaches and players. It's hard to believe it's this time of the year already for sure.

In regards to expectations, we want to build from last year. Obviously we weren't satisfied. Felt like we were just right there on the cusp of getting into the NCAA Tournament. We didn't control what we needed to control, and that was probably win one more game.

It's fueled our fire all summer long. Our players have worked extremely hard, and I'm really excited about that locker room. That culture piece has always been huge for us. The girls have had a great offseason, and they've got a couple weeks in August to be able to go home and then come back at the end of the month, and they picked up right where they left off.

Really feel blessed we've got a great group of scout guys that we battle against every day, and I think they're making us a little bit more tougher and more accountable. That's really good.

I think anytime you go against bigger, faster, stronger, that elevates you for sure.

So our returning players, obviously coming back with quite a bit of experience. I just think the maturity, the leadership is exactly what we need to have out of them right now. Excited about our young guys. We've got two freshmen that have already elevated our program on the court and in that locker room, and then we've got a pretty special



transfer, Katlyn Gilbert, who's coming in from Notre Dame, has had some injuries and whatnot, but a pretty special player who I think has a chance to really, really elevate us, as well.

Q. The commissioner this morning cited Missouri a couple of times over your upset over South Carolina and why we need to increase the March Madness tournament. Can you talk about your thoughts on the potential increasing of postseason tournaments?

ROBIN PINGETON: Well, that's why he gets the big bucks. He gets to address those. He probably thinks about issues and challenges more than we do as coaches.

But it is crazy and awesome to see how much the game has grown. I think you've got players that start at a much younger age in their development, and just the growth of the game as a whole.

You look at some of those teams that are left out of March Madness, and it's really unfortunate. There's so many great moments and fairy-tale stories within the NCAA Tournament.

I think it would be great if we could expand it. I think there's enough teams that you wouldn't lose the quality of the tournament, and I think it only elevates it as a whole.

Q. With the transfer portal, has that changed your philosophy? Some coaches may be shifting away to pursue transfer players instead of the high school level. Maybe it's geared toward that end of the spectrum.

ROBIN PINGETON: Yeah, that's a great question. I think it's changed the game quite a bit, and I think as a coach you've always got to try to stay one step ahead of it because you never know from year to year what the rosters are going to look like.

I think there's value in both. I think when you recruit a high school kid, I know for me personally, the hopes are that they're going to be in our program for four years and you're going to have a chance to develop them. There's going to be a sense of pride in representing your program.



I think when you take a transfer portal player, just the experience that they've had, they've already been there, they've done that, they've played on the big stage under the bright lights. I think the biggest challenge is just the speed of the game.

I think time management for those high school kids coming into college can be really challenging.

So there's pros and cons probably both ways in regards to which direction you go with your recruits. But for me personally, we're probably going to continue to do a little bit of both. I think there's great value in both the high school player and great value in just seeing what's available in that portal and if it fits your program.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about the newcomers on your team and kind of the impact you're expecting from them?

ROBIN PINGETON: Yeah, I would love to. First, Ashton Judd. She's a young lady from the state of Missouri, has won at a very high level, versatile player, which is really important for us and our system because of the way that we play. Has the ability to probably play the 2, 3 or 4. She's got good size. Really impressed with the strength that she's come in. A lot of times, when you have freshmen coming in, it just takes a while to get caught up in the weight room.

But she brings great size, really good athleticism, can knock down shots, which obviously we like that a lot.

I think the biggest learning curve for her has been on the defensive end, but just a worker. High motor, competes at a really high level in everything she does. And both her and Averí, our other freshman, have absolutely impacted our program already.

Averí Kroenke is a kid that's a local kid from Rock Bridge who we saw play quite a bit. We knew we were getting a kid that had a high motor, but she talks nonstop. She is a fierce competitor, as well, defends really well, has great speed. We've got great speed at that point guard position with Mama, but to have somebody that can come in and continue to play at that pace defensively, also the ability to get a piece of the paint, transfer the advantage, that was huge for us.

Then Katlyn Gilbert, she's our transfer from Notre Dame and has been in and out of games with injuries and whatnot. So our biggest challenge is to keep her healthy and watch that training load. But what an incredible young lady, just mature beyond her years, has an extremely high basketball IQ, has the ability to probably play 1 through 4 in

our system, plays with great pace, and has really -- I think from a leadership standpoint, she's not super outgoing, but when she speaks, people listen because they have so much respect for her game.

She's going to be somebody that we're going to be counting on heavily this year, as well.

Q. Haley had mentioned working really hard to build chemistry with the newcomers. What goes into bringing the new people along?

ROBIN PINGETON: Yeah, I think for our returning players, they understand what that needs to look like, and not because it's forced but because you truly care.

When you look in that locker room, when it's coach led, it's always going to be pretty surfacey, but when it's player led, I think that's when you have the opportunity to go to that next level. Our returning players, they've been a part of those years when Sophie played for us and they understand what that needs to look like, and that's why they came to Mizzou.

The intentionality, the time commitment that you've got to put in to build those relationships so you build that chemistry on the court is really, really important. Just grabbing lunch, grabbing dinner, going down to the lake as a team. Just this last weekend had an opportunity to go to Fear Fest with Halloween coming up.

But just those extracurricular opportunities. It can't be for two and a half hours on the court and that's the only time you spend together, at least not in our program. That culture is really important. Sometimes it's just putting your arm around one of those new players or underclassmen and just say, Hey, I've been there before and it's going to be okay, dealing with homesickness, whatever it looks like.

We do a lot as a team off the court, and I think that continues to build that chemistry on the court.

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