

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

**Vanderbilt Commodores**

**Jerry Stackhouse**

Men's Media Day Press Conference

**Q. You've obviously been there a while now. What are your expectations for the team this season, and how do you feel at this stage of your career there?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Well, I feel really good about our group. I think we have a lot of young guys that we've implemented this summer. It's a really talented young group. Our older guys have been good leaders this summer.

We had our foreign trip this year, which was a great trip. Had a great time for it, to have some bonding and build some camaraderie between that older group and the younger group.

They're working hard. I think we have six guys coming back that have at least probably three years of experience, and that's really our model. I don't think the kind of one-and-done is our model. It's getting guys and us really banking on our development, and we're there. Our first freshman class is a senior now, Jordan Wright.

I think it's time for us to really take that next step because we have that leadership to help bring along our younger guys.

**Q. You have the fundraising campaign for the men's and women's basketball. Has that affected recruiting, and has recruiting changed for you over time as you've been a coach at Vanderbilt?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Well, yes, recruiting has definitely changed for us. I think it's much easier to come in and sell your program and sell what's happening once you have a body of work.

We didn't have a body of work when we first got there, and the only thing that was kind of -- people that was recruiting against us, it was easy to say that that team didn't win a



game in the league when we first came in.

And I think now that we've had some success, we've gotten better every year, last year finished off with a nice run in the NIT, so I think we're primed to take that next step and hopefully get into the NCAA Tournament.

I think the league, this is a great league to be in to help your chances because you're playing probably quad 1 and quad 2 every night, so if you're able to string together wins in this league, which we feel we're capable of doing, then we have a chance of meeting that goal.

**Q. A couple big ideas in college basketball right now on summer basketball and expanding the NCAA Tournament field. Just wanted to get your thoughts on each of those.**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: I'm all for expanding the field. If we were on the bubble, having a few more teams that could get in there would be great. I think it's just one of those things where we've got to compete. Got to compete against a lot of different dynamics that's going on in college basketball right now.

But a lot of instability from the standpoint of trying to figure out exactly NIL and all those different components.

So I think it's just -- we're doing that. I don't think that we're going to be a team that's going to be behind anybody else. Being in this conference, we're going to have -- it's a great selling point for us, so we're looking forward to continuing to seek and learn about different collectives and different things that we can have as much opportunity to take care of our guys as anybody else in the league.

Yeah, I think it was great for us. I thought when you have summer basketball, you get a chance to onboard your young guys a little bit in the summer, not just those few months, but being able to take that summer trip this year, that was huge for us.

I thought that the camaraderie, you saw our guys spend some time -- even though they're on campus together, they don't really spend as much time as you'd think. Once basketball season, they're all together, but I think this was an opportunity for them to not just be basketball centric and



just get to know each other a little bit.

And it was fun to watch. Fun to watch our older guys kind of mingle with some of our younger guys, our new guys.

We got a couple guys from the transfer portal who I think are going to be big additions for us this year. Ezra Manjon is replacing Scotty Pippen as our point guard. He was at UC Davis the last couple years. He still has a couple years with us.

We're excited about his -- you just don't know. When you get your guys out of the transfer portal, you don't know if the film you see and everything translates, especially when it's coming into this level, coming into the SEC.

But we're very confident that the guys that -- that our eye test is telling us that we have a really good group, and I'm excited to get started.

**Q. Now that you've had some time, what are some lessons you've taken away from it? And then what would your NIL deals have been if you could have had them when you were a player?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Well, I'm still trying to go back retroactive and get some if that's the case. I think I might have been at the top of the game a little bit back in the mid-'90s.

You know, it's always a learning experience, man, coming to any new situation and trying to find things that work. I think we've done that. We definitely kind of have a game plan, kind of a Bible, so to speak, of how we want to do things offensively and defensively.

But you never get married to that too much that you don't leave room for individual talent to come in and supersede some of the things that you want to do and try to play around their strengths.

But for us, man, it's just continuing to understand who we are. We're a defensive team that the numbers say that we shoot a bunch of threes, but I like to get the ball outside. Nothing changes from that standpoint. We want to have more paint points. We want to get to the free-throw line. We want to create more turnovers. We want to get more offensive rebounds than the other team. I think those are kind of staples of who we are and who we strive to be long-term.

I think we've proven through a couple of years of -- we had dealing with COVID, dealing with injuries pretty much every year, but as the season has gone along, I think we've found a way to get better. And by the time the tournament

was rolling around, we were playing our best basketball.

I think this is probably the first year that I've said we probably could sustain -- not that we ever want an injury, but I think we could probably sustain an injury or two because of the depth that I feel that we have.

I'm looking forward to showcasing that. And our guys, they're tired of playing against each other, so I'm pretty sure they're ready to get after somebody else, as well.

**Q. What were your memories from playing at Auburn last year, the atmosphere there? And then we assume you're probably the best basketball player of all the coaches in the league, but is there a coach that could maybe hang with you in the game of Horse?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Probably not. (Laughter). No. But coming to Auburn was tough. I'm glad to see Jabari Smith has gone on to an NBA team. I think he was a big difference in that game. He had us coming out hard against us. I thought we did a lot of things well that game. We went into probably one of the best environments in college basketball.

I think going into Auburn and just the setting, kind of a smaller venue, and the students and everybody is right there on you. It's an unbelievable environment to play in and coach in, and I thought we gave them everything, play here and play there. We almost was able to withstand the big night that Jabari had against us. He had an unbelievable night.

So I just feel like for us, it's taking that next step and continuing to improve our talent pool, which we have, and I think the outlook going forward even with the class that we have coming in next year is just kind of more on par with the talent level that's in the SEC. And now it becomes more of a chess match of X's and O's and schemes and everything like that, and we feel very comfortable we're in that field.

Nate Oats. Maybe Nate Oats could shoot a little bit.

**Q. I see in the notes that you're the only team in the SEC that your final NET ranking improved for the last three years. How do you look at metrics like that as a sign of progress, or is the eye test to you what you see every day more important to you?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Yeah, I think it's great to validate it with some sort of algorithm like that, the KenPoms and the different things. Like I said, our number, we jumped 40 points every year since we've been here, so that's been it. But again, our eye test and our development, which I

talked about early on, not only just our individual player development but our development of understanding how to play the game and how to share the floor with other good players, we've seen that improve.

And I think when you start to see that improve and then all of a sudden you go look at some of those numbers about offensive ratings and defensive ratings, you're like, okay, it justifies it. It is definitely gratifying to see the things that we're seeing with our eye are also showing up in the metrics, as well.

**Q. Just wanted to ask you, I'm reading a book right now with my 10-year-old about Bobby Knight. And when he picks his jaw up at the end of each chapter, I say, You can't coach that way anymore. But you played for one of the masters in Dean Smith whose style might translate a little better. How much does coaching really change?**

JERRY STACKHOUSE: Well, I think everybody has their own identity. They have different people that they've taken things from, but more so than anything, it has to be your own personality. I think if it's not your personality, then you can't have success in any league or anything that you're doing.

But I really do -- yeah, probably the Bobby Knight tactics aren't -- probably wouldn't go over well now with everything that's going on in college basketball or with the mental wellness and different things like that. People are really aware and, rightfully so, have to be attuned to those things and the different challenges that kids have now that are different than what we had.

Just living in the social world, living on all the social platforms, it's just a different challenge than what we had back in the mid-'90s and early '90s.

I'm glad I feel like I had one of the best role models. I think he always operated with class. He always tried to make sure the players received the accolades and everything and deflected everything from himself. He was an unbelievable role model to watch from a coaching standpoint.

And then a lot of things he would do from an X's and O's standpoint, I still go back to that. Still no middle, we're still coming with the low man, we're still doing all those things and all those drills that I did at North Carolina. We're still going to slide steps. Every day we're going to have an offensive thought, a defensive thought, and a thought of the day about life.

I think those are -- it's going to be a schedule. Everything

is on time. We want to make sure that we do things in a timely fashion, and those are all things I got from Dean Smith that I implemented into everything that I do on a day-to-day basis.

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