

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

LSU Tigers

Matt McMahon

Men's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with LSU. We'll take questions.

Q. At this point in the pre-season, where are you right now? You still have a lot of work to do?

MATT McMAHON: Yeah, hopefully we're a little further along. We had the opportunity to go to The Bahamas this summer. We got those 10 days of practice. I thought that was really important for us, not so much from an offensive or defensive standpoint, but just building the relationships within the team.

As you know, it was important for us to use the transfer portal in the spring to really bring some stability to our roster. Really pleased with what we were able to do there and the six guys we signed from the portal. I think we were able to bring in guys who have proven they can play at a high level. All came from winning programs where they were really well-coached.

We've talked about some of the Louisiana ties and the pride they'll take in getting to represent their state university at LSU.

With all that said, I think as a coach you're never where you want to be, but I'm really pleased with where we're at. I know our guys are anxious to get to these scrimmages and exhibition games to get to play against some other competition.

Q. After one year in the SEC, what is your take on the league? Several teams that are ranked. SEC has more teams in the pre-season polls than any other league. Is it even better than you thought it was before you got in it?

MATT McMAHON: Everything I thought it would be, you're talking about the Hall of Fame coaches in the league,

you're talking about a league that's had more NBA Draft picks than any other conference in the country over the last four years. I think I learned a lot from a basketball standpoint.

A lot of unique styles in the league. As you look in this new era, it's so hard to project where everyone is going to finish. We have some teams in our league who were really good last year and return a lot off those teams. We have some teams that were really good, had players move on to the NBA, then great success in high school recruiting or through the portal.

It's an unbelievable league. It's really for me something I'm excited that we were able to replenish our roster this spring. Looking forward to the new challenge this year.

Q. Were you surprised by anything last year that you saw in the league?

MATT McMAHON: No, wasn't surprised. During my time at Murray State, played the majority of the league through the guarantee games and all that. Coach Pearl came and played at Murray State while I was there. So knew how good the league was, knew the elite talent.

A couple things maybe stood out. The rim protection in the league, just unbelievable. The ability to protect the basket with shot-blockers. I think the length and athleticism defensively. Some people might say last year the league didn't shoot the ball very well. I would argue it was because of the elite defensive personnel and schemes of the programs.

Q. Why did you target Daimion Collins in the portal, and what will he bring to your team?

MATT McMAHON: I love Daimion Collins. You're talking about a guy, McDonald's All-American, top 20 player in the country coming out. At Kentucky, very well-coached there by Coach Cal. Played behind a guy who was pretty good in Oscar.

I think for Daimion, it's about playing with great confidence. I think he learned a lot in his two years there. But you're



talking about someone just loaded with talent. 6'9.5", 7'5" wingspan, 40-plus vertical, great young man. Really wants to be coached and wants to be good.

A little bit more skilled than I anticipated coming in. He has really nice touch around the basket. Again, needs the minutes. Hasn't played a whole lot these last two years. But I'm incredibly excited about the opportunities ahead for him.

Q. I think you might have a little bit of a unique perspective on this, having coached Ja Morant. When you look at two players, a transfer who is more of a proven commodity and a high school player who is more unheralded, does it creep into the back of your mind your past experience landing guys like that and having success?

MATT McMAHON: I think so. I think we as coaches have to continue to evolve and adapt in this new era. When I'm recruiting a transfer portal player, for example, I can no longer evaluate him as a 17-year-old high school senior. We have to evaluate him based on his body of work in college.

We wanted to, with the situation we were in, needing to get stability on our roster, get some proven production. The portal made a lot of sense for us.

We have seven of our 13 guys in their fourth or fifth year of college playing this game. We wanted to get older faster. I think that has enabled us to get our roster to stable ground where we can now recruit the best high school players in the country, especially now that the NCAA sanctions and penalties have been served and those are in the past.

I think from the high school aspect, we still have a formula that we like to follow. There's certain traits that we're looking for in the players we recruit. Now through the use of the portal this spring, I think we're well-positioned to recruit at a really high level from the high school ranks, the class of '24 and '25.

Q. You mentioned the penalties. Other than losing a scholarship next year, has everything been completed?

MATT McMAHON: Yeah, we served all those penalties in year one from that previous investigation. It was a challenging year. You and I have discussed it at great length. But I'm not one to really live in the rearview mirror. We're moving forward.

I think it is great to have clarity on that NCAA situation. That's all in the past. We're able to now move the program

forward.

Really excited to be able to do that.

Q. You were picked yesterday to finish 13th. How do you feel about that? Is it kind of crazy to try to pick those things?

MATT McMAHON: I admire the media that has to try and make those projections in today's college basketball because you don't know the rosters as well as you may have 5, 10, 20 years ago.

I've never really been one to put a lot of stock in the pre-season rankings. Would rather be picked there than the bottom. Some players maybe use that as motivation. I don't know. It's not something I pay any attention to.

I'm sure if you asked every player in this league, 14 really talented teams in this league, every 14 have the same goal: they want to go to the NCAA tournament and advance and do all these great things.

I think it's more important for us to focus in on the daily processes of building the habits, of taking all these different pieces we have and build them together into a team and create the buy-in that winning will require this year.

Q. (No microphone.)

MATT McMAHON: I didn't even know about it until you told me an hour ago.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

MATT McMAHON: Thanks so much.

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