

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

Thursday, October 19, 2023

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Kristy Curry

Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll turn it to you.

KRISTY CURRY: Good morning and Roll Tide. Excited to be in Birmingham today. Today is my 25th Media Day as a head coach. I'm truly blessed and excited for the journey ahead for our program this season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Talk about what you look forward to this year out of Sarah Ashlee Barker?**

KRISTY CURRY: I'm excited. It's an opportunity for Sarah Ashlee to really lead a program. She's always done a really good job. I think this is her team, it's Loyal McQueen's team and Aaliyah Nye's team. I've seen so much growth, maturity and poise in every area.

She's working on two degrees now. She's just really grown up a lot. She's healthier than I've seen her. We're just excited. She brings a presence with her physicality every day and her pace in practice. She even brings a stronger pace to our program with her words.

She's someone that players love to follow and love to play with. Just excited because she does, she brings an edge and toughness to our program that everyone feeds off of.

**Q. You're only returning five players this year. Can you talk about that turnover, what you've seen in the off-season to integrate new folks? Do you see it as a rebuild year?**

KRISTY CURRY: I don't think we ever rebuild. Our goal at Alabama is to always reload. We signed the No. 12 class in the country. Our recruiting has been phenomenal. We're excited. I understand we only return five, but the five we return are extremely experienced and talented, have played a tremendous amount of minutes.

Every single one of those five, when you look at a Loyal McQueen, it's time for her to shine, lead our team at the point guard position. She has tremendous experience from Georgia Tech and then within our system the last year and a half and played behind a winner and with a winner in Hannah Barber.

Again, it's time. Loyal is excited. She is being about it right now.

Then you look at Sarah Ashlee Barker who brings so much experience and toughness as I just mentioned. Just a phenomenal player, very talented.

Aaliyah Nye has really worked, has improved her ability to be a three-level scorer, best shooter in my mind in the SEC. Brings a lot.

Then you look at Karly Weathers might be the most improved on our team, has had an amazing off-season, is really doing so many things for us.

JeAnna Cunningham at 6'4" inside, it's her time. She's waited her turn. She's doing some good things.

I really like our new faces. They bring a lot of experience. Meg Newman is a transfer from Arizona State, was ranked 33rd in the country coming out of high school.

You look at Jess Timmons from NC State, she's good. It's going to be exciting to watch her. Brings a lot to our backcourt. Big, physical, and strong. Can really score it.

And then you look at our incoming freshmen, No. 12 class in the country, all three top 100. Essence Cody, the second McDonald's All-American in school history. She's special. Write her name down 'cause you're not going to even learn it real quick. We're excited. We recruited her as an eighth grader. Her loyalty and trust in Alabama through the process makes it really special to me.

Look at Naomi Jones who might be the sleeper of the class because she has exceeded every expectation. Her pace, her work ethic, she brings a presence on the boards, on



both sides of the ball that we probably haven't had athletically.

I love what they've added to our front line. Then a top 100 forward in Reyche Douglas, who both, all three played at the highest level with Nike, Under Armour. They bring a whole lot of experience.

But the sleeper of the bunch, again, I know I keep using that word, might be Del'Janae "Burger" Williams, who was All-MVC. She's really a talented little guard, brings a lot of quickness. We're going to be better defensively because of those six than we've been at Alabama, so I'm excited about it.

I could sit here and talk all day because you might have us where y'all put us as the media, but I think this team can be really, really good. We have a ton of potential.

**Q. You're coming off back-to-back 20-win seasons, made the NCAA tournament two out of the last three years. What has been the key of sustaining the success? Obviously the season didn't finish quite the way you wanted it to. What is going to be the key to making sure this year's team plays its best basketball in March?**

KRISTY CURRY: Our goal is always to make the NCAA tournament and compete for an SEC championship. The program is on the rise. We continue to impact that. I think the recruiting is the lifeblood. We bring our best class to the program that we've brought with a blend of transfers, freshman class. We have two commitments in class. Excited about what the future of this next class is going to hold to build on top.

It recruiting. We've done a really good job. Credit to my staff for that. It's why we're in the NCAA tournament. Then also, too, I think the reason is that the foundation has been laid. We had four players that left our program, two that are working in college athletics right now in Megan and Hannah. Phenomenal. Left with two degrees. And then we have Jada Rice, who left with two degrees, and Brittany Davis who left with two degrees. Jada is currently in Greece, and Brittany is currently in China playing.

Brittany was drafted. We've had two out of the last three years draft picks in the WNBA. We've had multiple players leave with multiple degrees. Highest team GPA in program history last year.

So the foundation is laid on the court, in the classroom, and in the community. It's this time, it's this team's turn for that. I think that the expectations, that's what it's about at Alabama. So the foundation has been laid by a

phenomenal group before them. Just excited for what this group can accomplish.

I think as far as how do we finish better, we had two games on the road that were close. One-possession games. Then we had two at neutral sites, one-possession games. We lost by two at home to Ole Miss, had a silly foul at the end.

Special situations, a couple stops here or there. Those were all one-possession games. We've got to find a way to close out. I've got to coach better. We have to continue to have players step up and make plays at critical moments. It's a game of mistakes in the SEC. To be able to finish the season stronger is something we'll look at with pace, conditioning, where we're at, the things that I can do to help us finish stronger.

So proud about where we're at, headed. We've turned the program around, and we're going to continue to be on the rise.

**Q. This is your 11th year in Tuscaloosa. What have you learned from your first 10 years, and how have you grown as a coach?**

KRISTY CURRY: Well, absolutely it's the culture. I've learned in Tuscaloosa it's the best place in the world to live. I love waking up every single morning in an amazing community to raise two awesome girls at home. For a group of young ladies every day in our program to have that opportunity to be around a culture of excellence, whether it's the classroom, court, community, our leadership in Greg Byrne and the support.

It's an amazing group of coaches. Just every single day to be able to wake up and learn and grow from Patrick Murphy, what he's done with Alabama softball. Then look at what Wes has done with soccer. Then you look at what Rashinda is building in volleyball. You look across the department, a culture of excellence where everybody really cares about each other, not only at work but in the community.

It's a lot of fun to be in Tuscaloosa and wake up every day, I'm truly blessed to say Roll Tide.

**Q. I want to ask you about Sarah Ashlee Barker. What would you like to see from her this year? Also Essence Cody.**

KRISTY CURRY: I think with Sarah Ashlee we're going to look to move her more to the three spot. A lot bigger across the front line. We'll have more paint points and paint production. It's going to allow us to move her more to

the perimeter.

I think that's her natural spot. We'll play her both inside and out. She's improved her three-point shot in the summer, midrange. Becoming more of a three level scorer. Her toughness, edge, grit. She's just nasty in a really positive way. Just brings an edge every day. Everyone around her really respects how she goes about her business.

It's really been fun to be able to really honestly probably move her back to her natural spot on the perimeter.

Essence really has brought a lot to our front line. I think she's had to learn the pace, playing with the shot clock consistently. But she is extremely talented. She brings a lot of athleticism, size. Not only can she play inside, but she can step out and shoot the three, which I think you're going to see her do a lot.

I think she's a mismatch problem. Her ability on the glass is going to be better because of her and Naomi Jones and Meg Newman on our front line.

It's given us an opportunity to move Sarah Ashlee back. Really going to look to get more paint touches and play a little bit more inside-out.

**Q. Can you speak to how the three is going to play into your game strategy this year, look different.**

KRISTY CURRY: It's always going to play into it. We want to shoot the first open shot, play fast in transition. I think it's a fun style to play. It's something that in recruiting we want to play fast. There's no secret about that.

We work an awful lot on recruiting. If you can't shoot, you probably don't need to be at Alabama. We love to recruit shooters. We've consistently done that. I think we're going to lose. Obviously on paper, when you look up and see Hannah is gone and Brittany is gone, but I think you have to understand that Loyal McQueen has much improved from three, Jess Timmons can flat-out knock it down, Reychel Douglas is doing a really good job of improving hers. Aaliyah Nye is consistent. Karly Weathers has been the one that really has been consistent from it.

That's the joy of college athletics and coaching is when somebody is gone, it's somebody else's turn. To see these kids step up. We had an opportunity to go to Spain this summer. We had 18 practices in the summer, really got a step ahead with our system and style of play for our new faces. Our kids have shot the ball really well all summer. We want to continue to do that.

We're not going to change. I feel like we've given a different dimension in the paint. We're going to have more paint production along with the three-point shooting.

**Q. Your team committed most fouls per game in the SEC last year. Do you see that physicality as a negative thing or...**

KRISTY CURRY: I think we're always going to want to come out and be physical. We're going to have to be better and defend without the foul. We love to run and play fast and get open looks in transition, but it's hard to do that against a set defense.

So we want to be able to defend better without the foul to give ourselves an opportunity to be able to execute and play a little bit faster offensively.

It's definitely an area that we need to improve. I feel like this team is bigger and stronger across the front line. It gives us a dimension where we can play, move Sarah Ashlee back to her natural position.

We have a much more athletic backcourt with Loyal McQueen and Jess Timmons, or a much better job. Del'Janae "Burger" Williams brings a lot defensively. We feel like we've improved our backcourt defensively, and hopefully we'll play better without the foul.

**Q. With so much talent coming to the floor but obviously a mix of new faces, what is the ultimate challenge or your philosophy to get the ladies building chemistry in the pre-season, and how much does that come together more mid-season? A second question. Always love to ask you, the growth of women's basketball. We're continuing to see that at the next level in your league. What can you say about what's left?**

KRISTY CURRY: The first part of that question is, it was a really perfect home for us to bring in a big class, have a smaller group returning. We had the opportunity to go to Spain for our foreign tour.

So when you take those top experiences, not only do you get to work on practicing, but more important than that, I feel like it's always been about building chemistry, experiences that we have off the floor. The experiences with travel and long flights, the opportunity to immerse into a different culture. It really gave us a chance to have different roommates in each city.

All the things that we could do, we really felt like that has jump-started our chemistry and our ability. Sometimes within relationships, it's not about what you know, but it's

about how you get to know 'em. We've really done a good job with that. We've spent a lot of time off the floor here in the pre-season. We have a scrimmage upcoming. The things and the opportunity we have planned around that to just build relationships and chemistry.

Our kids do a really good job. I mean, they've got dinner night. I heard them saying the other night they were all going to Loyal's and cooking. I've had them over to the house. The opportunities in recruiting weekends to spend time together.

It's not about 94 feet and the X's and O's. It's more about chemistry, especially in the day and time. The joy of coaching to me is, with the portal, new faces, turnover, I spend as much time on chemistry as I do in the X's and O's with them, relationships, getting to know them as people.

They don't care how much I know; they want to know how much I care. I think that is the philosophy in all of our program as far as our entire staff. I am blessed to return a great group of staff that I haven't mentioned.

The growth of women's basketball, it is so special. To be doing this as long as I've been blessed to do it, 25 years as a head coach, to see the fan support, to see growth in the WNBA. If you didn't watch the game last night, you missed it. It was pretty special.

Just the opportunity to see where our game is at, I have so much great respect. But we have so far to go. I love what our league has done from an attendance standpoint, how we promote our sport. So thankful for the opportunities and so excited about the growth. Appreciate everybody that plays a big part in that.

**Q. Obviously the league has carried the banner for women's basketball throughout college basketball. You outlined the depth on your team this year. How do you think that that depth will help you compete against the likes of the LSUs and South Carolinas?**

KRISTY CURRY: I've had the question in Tuscaloosa, you got a small roster. I have a small roster, that means everybody is going to participate and be happy, right?

I think we feel like all 11 on our roster can really contribute. I think it's going to be critical, I think you're going to see it across our league and the country, who can stay healthy.

We're excited for the depth that this roster gives us. The versatility of the roster is a little bit different than we've had. It's the most versatile roster. I feel like that depth is really going to help us.

I feel like our pre-season schedule, to start off our first seven games, I think six of those teams went to the post-season. We're about to jump into it real quick. It's going to give us an opportunity to use that depth early and often with our pre-season schedule.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

KRISTY CURRY: Thank, y'all. Have a good day and Roll Tide.

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