

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Kentucky Wildcats

Kyra Elzy

Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're ready to start with Kentucky. We will go straight to questions.

Q. The end of last season, the SEC tournament was a real high to end on. How does it feel having ended the season with that? Does that bring a level of confidence into this year?

KYRA ELZY: Absolutely. That was the momentum that we needed. At the end of the year, get our players more confident. Something that we could build on over the summer.

Now they knew what they were capable of. They didn't have to question or doubt it. They took that into the summer, along with a lot of hard work.

Coming into this season, new mindset, new team, new energy, new goals.

Q. Your team brought in an NIL director. Why did y'all do that? What do you feel like that's added to your team?

KYRA ELZY: Yes, we hired Liz Brown. I am so thankful for her. The NIL is a big part of what we do now. As a coach, you want to coach basketball. There's so many facets of our job.

But having an NIL director that can go out, meet with businesses, build the relationships and rapport, meet with our players, give them an opportunity to build their brand. Was so thankful for Mr. Barnhart for allowing me to have that position. It allows me to coach basketball, what I want to do.

Q. A lot of new coaches this off-season. Talk about that transition and how y'all have been adjusting to new faces.

KYRA ELZY: Yes. Thank you for asking about the staff. I love my staff.

Sent them a message last night like, Y'all are my people.

But have Coach Niya Butts who has been with me. We played together. Been best friends for a long time. I'm still putting up with her. But her knowledge of the game, she probably knows me better than anyone on the staff and in the program.

Coach Jen Hoover, another former head coach. She is a wealth of basketball knowledge. Passionate.

Added coach Crystal Kelly this year, which I'm so excited about. This is telling my age, but actually recruited her at Western Kentucky. When I called her back, I was like, After carving 42 pumpkins to get you to Western Kentucky, I know I'm going to get a yes to Kentucky. Having another Kentucky girl understanding what it means to represent the state of Kentucky.

Added Coach Jaamal Rhodes and Coach Jen Huth, both great people who love the game. Passionate.

Let me tell you, going from four coaches to six coaches on the floor, that's a lot of people on the floor. It's been a lot of fun. That's adding not just our coaches but our practice team who thinks they're coaches, too, along with our managers. I'm managing a lot of people in practice that all think they can coach.

It's been a fun ride.

Q. Your former player Rhyne Howard is back in the SEC at Florida. What is it like having her back? Any discussion with her to have her maybe come to Kentucky?

KYRA ELZY: I'm so happy for Rhyne. She's an unbelievable talent. She knows exactly where home is. She had a great career at Kentucky. Relationship goes way beyond the four years.



I'm excited for her to be back in the SEC. Something on her résumé. Obviously she's killing it in the WNBA. When the ball stops bouncing, our goal for every player, not just Rhyne, is to make sure they're prepared for life after basketball.

She was just in Lexington maybe a week ago, she was in our huddle. I said, You know what, I'm just so proud of you. Have a WNBA job, but another job. You are a productive citizen of the world.

We did something right at Kentucky. Happy and proud for her.

Q. What do you think is the overall state of the SEC right now?

KYRA ELZY: Well, this league is the best league in the country for a reason. Unbelievable coaches, a lot of talented players. It is a gauntlet. Every day you have to bring your A game.

But I just think the caliber of teams that we have, when you look at the reigning national champion, they have been from the SEC. In order to be the best, you have to play the best, and the best is the SEC Conference.

Q. Can you speak a little bit about recruiting Brooklynn Miles out of the portal, then the other folks you've brought on that are new this year.

KYRA ELZY: Yes. Brooklynn Miles, it's been great to have her back home. She's a Kentucky girl. We recruited her on the front end. Obviously it didn't work out for us, but it's been great having her back.

Brooklynn brings that dog and edge that we need. She's very competitive. She's a vocal leader. But she also understands what it means to put that Kentucky jersey on, being from the state of Kentucky.

We have two freshmen in Janae Walker and Jordy Griggs. I love their competitive spirit. But they're being coachable right now. It's a transition to be a freshman. They don't know what hit them yet. They're still trying to get through practice. I love their ability to be resilient. They will both help us.

Q. Maddie Scherr has been impressive for you guys. How would you describe her evolution since she arrived?

KYRA ELZY: Maddie Scherr is a pro. I think she came in a year ago and was baptized by fire, was still trying to find her way, her voice on this team. Towards the end of last

year she found that. This summer she's really emerged as the leader on this team.

You're not going to find anyone more competitive than her. Even in practice, she will take a coach's practice play, to make sure the scoring is correct, so she has to read over it before we start the drill so she makes sure her team is getting the correct points on the board.

But her competitive spirit, she's going to fight, claw. She loves winning. That is contagious. I think she will really come into her own this year. Now she knows where she fits.

Q. How do you keep great ends to the season consistent?

KYRA ELZY: Yes, we would like to start that way, as well.

Obviously it's a process. I think having veteran guards this year will help us. It is a player-led team. Obviously I set the tone along with the staff, but when you have those voices in the locker room echoing what you're trying to get done, the culture. We have a leadership council. They've really been trying to do that.

Now everyone is invested.

Then setting the tone early in practice. We've done a better job of putting their backs against the wall. Now we're going to get tested in the non-conference and be ready for the conference season. But we're looking for that steadiness this year.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

KYRA ELZY: Thank you. Go Cats.

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