

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

## Georgia Bulldogs

### Katie

## Abrahamson-Henderson

### Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Georgia. We'll start with questions.

**Q. We've had a bit of a theme in the discussion today about the growth of women's basketball.**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Love it.

**Q. Just to start off simply, obviously you've seen a mass amount of growth in this conference. What have you liked about it? What is still left?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yeah, I mean, obviously I played in the SEC several years ago. We had a lot of attention back then. But now with the media and social media, just everything that we're doing right now. Even the game last night, the WNBA game, was amazing. It was exciting to watch. You saw a lot of different celebrities there.

That's a great way to get everything moving in the right direction. I don't think it's where it needs to be yet, but it's definitely moving in the right direction.

**Q. You're two in the position. Can you talk about what you're personally excited for and what you see for this team? Do you feel like they're contenders, in transition?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I feel like we're secret. I think we're a secret. I love obviously the underdog. I love that mentality.

We have a lot of newcomers on the team. We didn't lose anybody to the portal. Our system is in, to answer your question. Our system is in. After the first year, you had to get your system in. Now our system's in. Now we just

added some really good pieces to the puzzle.

Obviously we're excited. The pre-season picks, last year we got picked 9th and ended 5th. My team is always going to be really hungry and humble, play really hard and enjoy every game and take one game at a time. That's pretty much what you'll see this year.

**Q. You were the only team in the SEC to not lose anyone to the portal. That's very rare across the country. What do you attribute that to?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Some of it has to do with I'm a mother. I look at everybody as my family. A lot of it has to do with my assistant coaches. We've been together -- we actually added it up -- on an average 14 years together, my staff. I mean, it's pretty amazing.

I have a lot of former players that are my assistant coaches, too. They've stayed with me and they've wanted to get into coaching because they really enjoyed playing for us. If they wanted to get into coaching, they want to actually coach like my coaches do things.

I think it has to do with all that.

We do a good job of loving our kids up, too. It's not just about ball. We're not that kind of coaching staff where it's about ball only. We're about the total person and empowering women, obviously getting their goals, not just basketball, but what are they going to do the next 55 years of their lives. The ball's going to stop bouncing. We try to develop them as a whole.

**Q. On the other side, what was your approach to recruiting out of the portal?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Well, I mean, last year we had to do the portal because we had to sign 10 in the portal. That was a lot. Just really blended really well.

So now we're replacing those 10 portal players. Every year we're going to have some really good portal players. But I'm a big believer in recruiting freshmen because my staff and I do a really good job of development.



We really love to develop young women and get them better every single year. We feel if we don't get them better every year, we're not doing our jobs in terms of skill development. My coaches and I are really good at skill development, getting kids better, keeping the culture.

Every year we'll probably maybe keep one or two for the portal. We're going to really recruit freshmen really hard.

**Q. This is your first year without Diamond Battles and also Brittney Smith in a long time. Can you talk about that feeling, seeing Diamond being in training camp in the W, and do you see her coming back to be part of your staff?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I'm sure (laughter). She'd be a great coach. Diamond would be an amazing coach. Obviously I want her to play as long as possible, enjoy that, enjoy living in a different country. She's in Athens, Greece right now. How lucky are you? That's the first place you get to go?

It's hard not seeing her every day, not seeing Brittney every day. I've been around them for five years, recruited them for three years. That's eight years of our lives.

I think that's also why our culture is so good. I'm talking to both of them all the time right now, watching 'em on TV, watching their games and calling 'em and saying, Are you playing defense? Because it doesn't look like you're playing very much defense right now, Diamond. You need to score when you touch the ball.

It's a different team obviously without Diamond. But we have some newcomers that are really filling that role in terms of that Dawg mentality, that toughness that everybody liked about Diamond. We have some people that are already filling that role.

**Q. What is the culture you're trying to establish? And you mentioned Nykesha. What does she do for you on your staff?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I have three really, really talented assistant coaches. One is Tahnee Balerio. She does a great job of coaching the ones and twos, the point guard. She played point guard, was a point guard for me in college. Our three guards, Nykesha Sales coaches them, develops them, trains them, all that. Isoken Uzamere is our post coach. I have three phenomenal coaches.

It's fun in practice watching 'em because you and I were talking after that, and you were saying Nykesha used to

shoot these shots from halfcourt, and they go in. She's still doing it. Tahnee used to be a great passer. She's still doing it. Isoken laughs and says she's going to get every rebound and kick it out to Kesh so she can shoot it.

They're still very active. They play in practice. They trash talk in practice. It creates a lot of fun in practice with our players and stuff. Super competitive.

Love that. I love that. Sometimes I'm like, okay, Kesh, it's enough. Stop scoring so many points. Or, Tahnee, just calm down.

Our players love playing against them. The days they come out to practice, they walk out to practice, every day they don't play but they start warming up, Oh, gosh, here we go, they're going to play today.

I've just had some really amazing coaches that are still athletic and still can play.

**Q. From your perspective as a player and now as a coach, what edge does it take to become a contender in such a competitive league?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: It's that Dawg mentality. I mean, obviously that's why I'm at Georgia again because that's my mentality. That's how I play. That's how we played in the past.

I think it's that edge of the mental toughness part. I think there's a lot of talented players in the league. But it's like can you bring that out of 'em and they compete every single day. That's why our defense really ignites our offense. We start with that. We get after it.

Once we start getting really hyped with our defense and that Dawg mentality, then our offense goes into that. I think in the SEC, a lot of teams are like that. We're competing against that day and night. That's the favorite part of my game.

**Q. The defense was something you became known for last year.**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yep.

**Q. Do you tweak the style at all with the new players? Do you feel the team's identity still rests on that defensive edge?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Well, now you're giving away the scouting report a little bit (smiling).

I think that I learned from the best. Andy Landers, Vivian

Stringer. When I played for them, that was the reason Georgia went to the Final Four five times. It was because they had that tough defensive mentality. You know what I mean? Pat Summitt's teams were the same thing. I think championship teams and most college coaches will say the same, championship teams you have to be a great defensive teams. Some days your shots are off.

I think defense is something that can be very, very consistent, right? With our teams, we're going to be that defensive team that's going to wear you out. We're going to be that team that you're like, Get off me, get off me. We're never going to back down. We're going to keep coming and keep coming.

I just learned that. That's how I played. That's how I loved to play. Just get after people. But we're going to do some different things this year, too. Last year we came in with that system just because Diamond and Brittney and Lish, our players that came from UCF really knew that and they loved it, right?

But we're going to tweak some things. Not going to give you my whole scouting report.

**Q. Is it easy to find players that match that? Do you find it a challenge?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Well, for me it's easier because that's what I recruit. I find those diamond in the roughs, those kids. Going back to my staff and I really do a good job of development. So I can find a young lady that may not be as skilled as a sophomore or junior, but has that mentality. She's diving all over loose balls and she has amazing energy, she's a great teammate, she's just tough, just being tough all the time.

We feel we can develop their skill. I wouldn't want it the other way around where they have beautiful, beautiful skill, then I have to train that toughness. That's innate. That's like you got blood pumping in your heart or Kool-Aid. I want that blood pumping in their heart. They love the game so much. I don't want players that just like it, I want players that love the game.

Recruiting-wise, we really look for those type of players.

**Q. Yesterday Missouri brought four players. I don't know if there's a second player, but you have one player listed. Why?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: No reason. They were practicing today. We had a practice today, and it was on our sheet. We practiced today. Some of them academics.

Obviously Javyn is going to be our key player this year. She has most of her classes online. She got the lucky choice. But I probably would have brought her anyway.

**Q. What have you seen of Javyn's development and the role you feel she's going to play?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: She's going to be our go-to player for sure. I would have coached her all five years. Oh, my gosh, I can't even imagine. She's really bought into your mentality. She's really bought into the style of play we do. She's really bought into her fitness part, getting her mind, body and soul ready to go, that Dawg mentality, that toughness thing. It takes a while to develop that. This is only our cycle year with her.

She would be in my system a sophomore. Usually sophomores start to really rise up. She looks amazing. She's really taken on that role. She's kind of a quiet assassin, but I'm forcing her to be more of a talker, more of a leader, more aggressive in terms of like how she plays.

She can score on the block. She can score on the perimeter. She's got all kinds of really great moves. She's got beautiful hands. Obviously we're going to move her around a lot. She can play a lot of different positions for us.

But super excited for her because she committed to Georgia when she was a sophomore in high school. Last year was a tough year for her, determining whether she was going to stay at Georgia or not. You talk about somebody that pumps blood, Georgia blood, Georgia red. She loves Georgia. She loves the program.

For her, to put the team on her back a little bit like Diamond did this year.

**Q. You lost a lot of people to graduation. Who are the leaders you see emerging? Do you feel there's a vacuum they've left?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Not at all because we develop from freshmen right away when they get in, teaching them how to be leaders, what to say, how to talk. I give them a role every day in practice. Everybody sprint, I just give them a vocal role to do every single day in practice.

I think that a lot of people don't talk about, her name now is Jordan Cole, used to be Jordan Isaacs, she got adopted, beautiful thing. Jordan is an amazing leader for us. She's definitely going to be a captain for us. She was a captain last year. Very vocal, has a huge IQ, she's a Dawg, plays

hard, does all the intangibles on our team that don't get in the stat sheet.

Obviously Javyn is going to score a lot of points, get a lot of rebounds. But Jordan does so many other things that people overlook. As a head coach, head coaches that watch us, know she's one of our toughest players on the floor. She's always been that great leader for us.

I think some of our newcomers are developing into some great leaders, too. It's just so fresh for them right now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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