

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Texas Longhorns

Coach Rodney Terry

Men's Media Day Press Conference



RODNEY TERRY: Okay, good afternoon. It's a great day to be alive. I said that to my guys this morning. We practice every morning, and it's the first thing I say to our guys because it truly is a great day to be alive every day, to get a chance to do what we have a passion to do in terms of myself coaching, them getting a chance to play, continuing to educate themselves and be a more well-rounded person. It is truly a great day to be alive.

We're excited about joining the SEC. It's a league that I know our fan base is super excited about. I'd be remiss not to thank the Big 12 for our 28 years. I was a part of the first year of the Big 12 as an assistant at Baylor University. We had some great years in that league. But we're excited about where we're going and what we're doing.

As we embark on a new journey in terms of our basketball slate in the SEC, I have a tremendous amount of respect for Garth and Commissioner Sankey. They've done an incredible job with their leadership, building what we think is the premier basketball league in the country.

Getting a chance to compete in this league from top to bottom, leaving the Big 12, it's not going to be any kind of drop-off. We have great coaches. We have great players. We have great venues in this league. We're super excited about being a part of it.

I think in terms of the media, I like to think that we're going to have a program that's very accessible -- myself being very accessible to you guys, my players being very accessible to you guys on a regular basis, and again, just trying to be very forefront in terms of what we bring to the table every day and having a lot of integrity with what we do and how we do it.

I'll open the floor for any questions from that point.

Q. On January 29th you're going to be facing your

former boss in Chris Beard, and since joining the conference, what have your conversations been like with him? And in this era of college athletics, how important is that first year as far as laying the foundation for a second year?

RODNEY TERRY: Great question. Chris Beard and I go way, way back. You're talking about 25 years of friendship. One of my really, really close friends in the business.

I wouldn't have this opportunity here at Texas if he wasn't kind enough to bring me back to Texas. Previously I was with Rick Barnes for nine years at Texas and got a chance to come back and embark on a second stint at Texas with the hope that we're going to get a chance to build a National Championship team, a team that gets to play on Monday night.

But he and I, our friendship, we're still really close right now. We're still talking, communicating at a high level, talking about other opponents other than ourselves and things of that nature.

But you talk about a great person and a great coach, Chris Beard is that kind of guy.

This league, I think, again, we're built for it in terms of our culture. I think it's a league, again, that there are going to be nights where you have to be really physical. There are going to be nights where you're really going to have to try to score the basketball. There are going to be nights where you really have to take care of the basketball, and from top to bottom, there are no nights off in this league.

I alluded to the fact earlier that they're great coaches, coaches that have taken their teams to the Final Four, and there's been great players in this league, and obviously a lot of really good intimate environments to play in that will be great venues.

Q. I covered Tramon Mark last year. Now he's with you. I know he led Arkansas in scoring, played well at Houston before that. What was it about him that made you want to get him in the portal, and what are your expectations for him this season?

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

RODNEY TERRY: Well, I'm a native Texan, so I've seen Tramon play a long time. When he was in the eighth grade and he was coming up and my dad coached at his high school that he played at that year, his high school years. But my dad got fired from that job and didn't get a chance to coach Tramon, but knew he was a really good young talent coming.

So I've seen him for a very, very long time. He's a youngster who has tremendous size, athleticism. He can go create his own shot. He can create for his teammates. Very good high IQ basketball player.

He's had a chance to compete, be coached by some really good coaches. So he's been coached very well. He's had a chance to start on a Final Four team at the University of Houston. So he's a guy that we look to bring a lot of experience, a guy that plays on both ends of the floor. He's a really good offensive player, but he's also a really good defensive player, as well.

You talk about a guy that we like to think that's going to be a great two-way player for us.

Q. You bring in Julian Larry and Jayson Kent, both from a really good Indiana State team last season, made the NIT championship game. What have those two guys brought in tandem or individually, and how have they adjusted to their surroundings?

RODNEY TERRY: Great question. We're a team that returns six turners from last year. So we've got a little bit of continuity from last year. We have six new guys from the portal, and we have four freshmen.

So we've got a great blend, great mix. And adding the two guys from Indiana State, talk about two guys that have played -- Jayson played there two years, Julian got a chance to play four years there. You talk about two guys that are really, really familiar with each other, and when they're on the floor, they're really in sync together all the time, whether it be from an offensive standpoint, defensive standpoint.

But I think they're two guys, too, that come into this season with a little bit of a chip on their shoulder. They didn't get a chance to compete in the NCAA Tournament a year ago. They went and had a deep run in the NIT where they played in the Finals and lost in the NIT.

I think, again, two guys that are getting a chance to play at this level for the first time. They're not entitled. They're excited about every day. They're excited about competing on this stage and showing people that they can compete at

the highest level.

I'm excited about what those guys bring to the table. Julian Larry is a guy who comes in and he brings a lot of energy and a lot of joy to our team every day with just his energy and presence on both ends of the floor. He's a guy that is going to be able to initiate offense. He's going to be able to play defense at a high level for us.

You talk about Jason is a guy who could be one of the elite cutters in all of college basketball. Great instincts, he's a guy that also should be a really good rebounder for us, and he can stretch the floor from the forward position for us, as well.

Q. You bring Tre Johnson today, and he's the only freshman representing the players. I wanted to just hear from you how has he developed on the floor, and then also as a leader in your program early on?

RODNEY TERRY: Well, absolutely. Tre, again, I alluded to the fact that we have six returners and six guys from the portal, four freshmen. So we've got 10 new players. Again, the blend of old and the blend of new and young, he being one of the young guys and a guy that I think, again, wants to get familiar with -- he's a guy that's deserving of being here today.

He's an extremely talented player, top 5 player in the country last year in his class. He's been the best player in his class in the state of Texas his entire career. He's a guy that we think fits our culture at a very high level in terms of what he brings to the table. Super competitive, a kid that wants to get better every day. He's proud of being from the state of Texas and representing Texas at the flagship program, and he's a super competitor.

I got a chance to coach Kevin Durant for one year at Texas, and he and Kevin have a lot of things that kind of cut from the same cloth in terms of incredible work ethic. He's a guy that you literally have to push him out of the gym. He's in the gym 24/7 much like Kevin was, and he's a super competitive kid.

You put the scoreboard on, and he's competing at another level in terms of really wanting to win and competing at a very high level.

He's a guy that we're counting on this year to have a big year and do big things in Austin.

Q. I asked Coach Moser before, you guys coached against Mark Pope at BYU, now he is at Kentucky. What does he bring to the table at Kentucky?

RODNEY TERRY: I think, again, Mark is a tremendous coach, tremendous person. He was a good player, as well.

I think having a chance -- I think I'm living my dream job. It's my dream job here. Every day I'm blessed and honored to be the head coach at University of Texas.

I think he feels the same way with Kentucky. He's a former player, won a National Championship there. There's a lot of pride in walking into the office every day when you feel like you're living a dream every day.

I can't speak for him, but I would think that it would be a dream for him to be the head coach at the University of Kentucky.

I think that his teams play with a great spirit about themselves. They're very unselfish. They share the basketball. Very good offensively. So you have to prepare in terms of really trying to have a really good defensive mindset because they're a team that can really score the basketball in my short time competing against his team in the Big 12. But very well-coached. Really good guy, great person.

Q. Looking back on your experience with Beard, what was the difference between that first and second season, just from a culture standpoint, obviously going further in the tournament the very next year, especially nowadays when the roster turnover and the transfer portal is what it is?

RODNEY TERRY: I'll tell you what, the first year we were really trying to build a culture. We came in and were really trying to instill in our guys how hard you have to work, trust the process, competing at an incredible level, having a physical mindset. Those were all things we really tried to build on. Preparation, trying to be one of the best prepared teams in the country.

I think the one thing that was glaring for us that was the difference from year one to year two was that we had continuity. We all strive to try to have continuity. I have six returners this year, four guys that played significant minutes for us last year.

Anytime I think in this landscape, and all of college athletics, if you're able to have some form, a level of continuity, then you give yourself a chance because those guys, they help build a culture, they help defend a culture every day.

In year two at Texas we had guys that were around from year one, they were now defending the culture. The new guys we brought in, they were showing our guys, this is

what we do and this is how we do it every day. Here are the expectations, here are the standards, and this is how we do it.

Then I think when you're able to have a guy for a second year in your program, he has a chance to build on what he did from year one and be great in year two. If you're able to have a guy for three years, just the continuity and having a feel for what you're doing and how you want to do it, the pace you want to do it, it rubs off, and it carries over to other guys that are coming in.

We were able to have that, and we had a number of different guys that had much better years from year one to year two because of that. They were familiar, comfortable with our system, and they could go out and really be themselves and not have to do as much thinking and trying to figure out what we're trying to get done as a program.

Q. What do you think the best thing about our team this year is?

RODNEY TERRY: Wow, that's a great one. Great question. I'll tell you what, I think the best thing about this group that we've put together is I think these guys all really like each other. I think that's so important in this day and time. In the summer when you bring your team in, you really try to establish some chemistry for guys.

This group here, I think they did it organically. You don't want as a coach to have to say, Hey, guys, you guys need to hang out together over here or you guys plan on doing this, doing these things together. This group loves being around each other. I think they cut up with each other off the court. They spend a lot of time off the court with each other.

Again, when you have great chemistry off the court, I think it lends you an opportunity to have really good chemistry on the court, and I think these guys will have each other's back. I challenge them to be great teammates every day, but I think they truly like being around each other. I see them cutting up and having fun with each other.

And to me, that's the best part of it because it's really what makes their experience -- what it's all about. Those are the moments that they're going to remember the most, when they're on the bus, cutting up on the bus and having fun in the bus, when they're back in the locker room and they're talking like they're at the barbershop, which they do. We've got Nic Codie, another freshman. He's a barbershop guy. He's back there and he's holding court.

But I hear that, and that's what you miss as a coach, when you were a player. You miss being around your

teammates and having fun and cutting up. That's what it's all about.

And so that's what I would say about this team. I think they all really like each other, and I think they're all super competitive. And I'm excited about our journey, and we've got a long ways to go, but I really like this group a lot.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

