

# Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

## Oklahoma Sooners

### Coach Jennie Baranczyk

#### Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Jennie Baranczyk of the University of Oklahoma on the podium.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Super excited to be here. Thank you. Pretty excited about our team and just this entire environment. It's been pretty incredible so far.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go to questions.

**Q. Obviously with a veteran team, it appears you've been building for this season. Was coming to the SEC part of your thought process in building your roster, or was it trying to have the best team you could each year?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Well, I didn't get to plan the extra COVID year. We have five fifth-year seniors. There wasn't necessarily intentionality in terms of just preparing for the SEC, although obviously an incredible conference.

I think what we really try to do is continue to build culture. We're pretty lucky to be able to have five fifth-year seniors that are just incredible women and pretty darn good basketball players, too.

We've obviously known we're coming to the SEC. We know the conference is absolutely incredible. But I'm just really excited that our culture continues to grow at a foundational level.

**Q. Can you talk about the process of getting Raegan Beers to become a Sooner and what you've seen from her so far?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Raegan obviously had an incredible first couple years at Oregon State. Things change. Obviously we know that going from one league to another.

Being able to watch what she's done was incredible. As the recruiting process opens up, she's exactly what we needed. She fits from a cultural off-court standpoint so well with our team and her personality. She fits so well on the floor.

I think one of the things that our team does so well is everybody's different, everybody brings a different skill set. She brings something that we did not have. It's been an incredible fit so far. I'm excited for our team to continue to go.

**Q. We haven't had your players in here yet. Could you talk about the two young ladies you brought.**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Absolutely.

Payton Verhulst was the Newcomer of the Year in the Big 12. What an incredible leader for us. She's a dynamic player. Her passing ability, her scoring ability, just her feel for the game is one that when you start to watch, you can see her create so much on the floor for us, even when she does not have the basketball.

She's also an incredible leader for us. Just a wonderful, wonderful young person.

Skylar Vann is an absolute incredible story. When she was in high school, she had zero Division I offers in the early signing period. She's gone from zero Division I offers in the early signing period to a Co-Player of the Year in the Big 12 Conference. Incredible story.

I love the way she attacks practice every day. She's from Oklahoma. She's getting a lot of young people to watch our program from our state that want to come and be a part of it. Just an incredible person.

**Q. What is the style of play you're going to bring to the SEC? Do you think it will translate well?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I think in terms of the style of play, we want to continue to share the basketball and make reads in our game. We like to play in a certain pace. We also need to defend. We want to be able to do that, too.



I love the versatility that we do have. We want to be able to play to each other's strengths, but a lot of what our system is, it's about spacing and being able to make reads. If you can do that in this league, it's amazing what you're going to be able to do.

I love that we're entering such a strong league. I feel really good about some of our preparation in the Big 12.

But we know, too, the SEC is the SEC. We'll be ready, and we're excited to continue to grow.

**Q. You're coming into the SEC, and you are coming off of back-to-back Big 12 champion seasons. How do you expect your movement into the SEC to go?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: We've been asked this question so much, right? We've had years. We were in the Big 12 knowing we were going into the SEC. I think the answer still remains the same in terms of when you enter into the league. It's not necessarily about what you're ranked or how you feel like you're going to translate. It's the teams that want to get better every day, that want to be addicted to growing. That's what we want to be able to do. We want to continue to be better.

I'll be able to answer your question in February because I don't know. You can look at paper, statistics, but you have to show up every single day.

I think what is amazing is that we're coming into this incredible league that's going to challenge us, it's going to stretch us. We got to get better, and we know that.

**Q. Obviously the proof is in the pudding. What does it say about the perception of your program that you're picked fourth in the preseason poll, both Raegan and Skylar got votes for Preseason SEC Player of the Year?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Other people get to pick your rankings, right? I picked everyone else's rankings, as well. I know this league is really, really good. I understand that. I get the respect. I get that.

I know I get to be at practice every day. It's October. You never really feel good as the coach in October, right? We got a long way to go.

But I do know the heartbeat of this team is to focus on getting better. We're not going to worry about what happens in February, March. We're not going to worry about that. We're not even going to focus on that. We got to get better today. We got to get better tomorrow. That's

literally where the focus is.

That's what you get with an experienced team. You can say that when you have a young team. They don't really understand that. When you have a group of seniors like we do, they understand that. When you have a player like Skylar who has gone from sixth player, she got to sneak in, then it was a target, and you've seen her work through all of that, you've seen other players start to work through that, then you know because they know. They know they don't get a day off. They know in this league you don't get a day off.

That is where our focus really has been. That's the best part about having an experienced team, is your practices are really good, and there's a huge sense of urgency every day.

**Q. Your freshmen, two in-state products. When you look at them, what gets you excited? The state of Oklahoma's basketball culture as a whole, what are you seeing from it?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: You want to really start at home. To be able to keep the best players in the state of Oklahoma, at Oklahoma, that's always been a goal. That's always going to be a goal. You want to continue to grow your fan base. That's something we want to be able to continue to do.

I think both of them have done an incredible job.

It's also a pretty unique dynamic that Skylar and Zya get to play together. It's only because of this extra COVID year. They've never gotten to do that because they're far apart in age.

It's fun to watch that dynamic. They don't go against each other. Zya is a little faster than Skylar. Sorry. You can tell her I said that when she comes in here (smiling).

It's fun to watch them have a different sense of pride when they're wearing a jersey because they know they're representing more than themselves and their own family, they're representing their community.

**Q. Would you mind describing the evolution of Skylar Vann.**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Absolutely.

Actually, before I got to be here, she had zero Division I offers, then it was late spring that Sherri Coale had offered her to basically walk on on the team, to come in and be able to play. She had a scholarship. Played her first year

obviously during a COVID season, which is interesting anyway.

We came in the next year as a coaching staff. I feel like Skylar is one of those players that just really has a hunger and is incredibly coachable. She can focus on one thing at a time to continue to build our game.

I think a lot of times people want to do everything, right? We get to a point that we get so tunnel visioned on one thing. She wanted to elevate and take steps in her game. I think she's been able to do that.

I think she also has an incredible ability to just show up every day. I mean, she's a gamer. She had to learn how to be a gamer in practice. She has learned that.

She works outside of practice time. She works. When she's your hardest worker, your team is going to be a little bit better. I think it's no coincidence that as she has continued to evolve her game, so has our team. We've continued to win more games.

I will say that Skylar also is one that has an incredible belief in her team. She doesn't just see her own game needing to improve. She's able to make sure everybody else's does, too.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Guys, thank you. Thanks for covering women's basketball.

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