

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

Wednesday, October 16, 2024

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Kristy Curry

Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Kristy Curry from the University of Alabama to the stage.

KRISTY CURRY: I just appreciate what Greg Sankey does for SEC women's basketball. I have known him for a lot of years. Just appreciate him very much, so...

Excited, y'all. I mean, 24 wins a year ago, we're certainly looking forward to building on that. Return eight to our squad, have added six new faces. I'm a big believer that it's really important as you continue to build a program that you have a solid freshman class. Another top freshman class in the league recruiting-wise with three faces, and then we've added three transfer young ladies who we feel like are amazingly talented, mature.

We return eight with those six and feel like we put ourselves in a position with more versatility, more depth. Have really given ourselves a chance to improve from a year ago.

So proud of what we've accomplished and continue to elevate the program. To be ranked in the AP poll for the first time since 1999, men's and women's basketball, I think we're one of two programs in the country. We're just excited about Alabama basketball, period.

Eager to continue to work hard in practice. We have a scrimmage this Saturday, exhibition on October 30th.

I'm extremely proud today to have Sarah Ashlee Barker, Spain Park native, 10 minutes away. I think her house is 10 minutes from here. Along with the number one three-point shooting returner in the country, with Dyaisha Fair and Caitlin Clark going to the league, in Aaliyah Nye. Incredible leaders, incredible workers. Both will leave Alabama with two degrees. Really proud to be their coach and have them be at Media Day today here with me.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go to questions.

Q. You talk about the AP top 25. How do you push even further? What's your message to the team with those expectations?

KRISTY CURRY: I think you continue to push with being where your feet are every single day, continuing to get better, continue to work hard in recruiting. Recruiting is the lifeblood of your program. We'll continue to do a great job with that.

It's been twofold. You've continued to see our program on the rise, ascend, continue our finishes. We're a few steps away from continuing to make it even better.

I've been a part of programs that were established. I've been a part of programs that were built. We're very proud in how we've built this. We've done it the right way with the right kind of high-character young women.

Recruiting, being where our feet are every day, continuing the message of -- we talk a lot about grit, love and gratitude. We want to be the grittiest in the SEC; we want to love the front of our chest, which is a little bit challenging in this day and time, but our group does an amazing job at being proud to represent the University of Alabama on and off the floor; and we're just grateful. Look at where our game is at. Look at the opportunity we now have women in sports.

Core values, I think continuing to be where our feet are every day, continuing to work as hard as we possibly can.

I do want to go back and say preseason rankings, I've never put much thought into it. Been ranked, non-ranked. Played in a Final Four, came back, preseason.

I think it's important to understand to us it shows the progress of our program, but we want to focus on the finish. So we're not going to get caught up in this and that. We're going to be caught up in being the best version we can be every day.

Q. What was the dramatic improvement of Sarah with

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the 10 points differential last season? Aaliyah Nye, what else can she do besides shoot the three-point shot?

KRISTY CURRY: I think the thing with SA is we pride ourself at Alabama, in a day and time where it may not often be talked much about, in player development. I think what SA does beyond practice, what she does in the film room, with her conditioning, nutrition, with our strength staff in the training room, all those pieces, and her maturity as a player, embracing those areas.

We have the best resources in the country, the support we get from our administration, to put them in a position to be successful. When you embrace those resources like SA has, I think she's done an unbelievable job of getting in the gym and working on her game.

Credit to our staff. I think Kelly Curry has done a phenomenal job with that. It's been SA's energy and effort. To go from 6.9 points a game to First Team All-SEC a year ago, I don't think coaches can take a credit for that. I think it's a player's energy, drive and determination.

Aaliyah Nye, she's improved her ability to put the ball on the floor. I think you'll see her get to the free-throw line a whole lot more. She's the best returning shooter in the country because she gets in the gym and constantly shoots.

A lot of little girls will say, How do I become a good shooter? It's what you do when no one's watching. It's repetition. It's routine. Aaliyah has as special of a repetition and routine in her forté as anyone I've ever been around.

So it's the work those two put in. But more than that, I think you can say you're a good leader, but you have to be the hardest worker. Those two are really hard workers. That's contagious with our program.

Q. One of your transfers, Zaay Green, came from Arkansas Pine Bluff. What did you envision in getting her?

KRISTY CURRY: It's interesting, Commissioner Sankey mentioned Stephen F. Austin. In 1993 her mother was on that team. I don't know if that makes me old or if that just makes me seasoned. I'm not old, so I'm going to say I'm seasoned.

Yeah, it's phenomenal. It's so fun to have that now where I can recruit a lot of my former players' daughters.

Zaay is an incredibly special talent. I know we're talking

about a couple of returnees, but she is as good of a perimeter player as there is in the country. She has really come to Alabama. She is focused, motivated. She's really improved her shot since June. She's listed on the preseason draft board along with Sarah Ashlee and Aaliyah. To have three players mentioned in the top 30 in the country, she deserves every bit of it.

I think she's going to really improve our team because she's a big guard, size, versatility, unbelievable on the ball. Has an unbelievable pace. We love to play fast. She fits perfectly, seamlessly to what we're doing. I tried to recruit her two other times. The third time she couldn't say no. I can't wait to see her put a really special finish to her career and it be at Alabama. Working on her master's.

But I think we talk about improving, the one thing was improving her shot. She's really looking great from three. But it's her ability to get to the rim. We haven't had a lot of presence putting pressure on the rim. She's really going to make a big difference. I think you'll see her really impact our squad in a big way.

Q. You mentioned the success that you had last year, the men's team, the expectations. Is there a real synergy between the programs?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, there is. Nate has been unbelievable, his staff, their support of our program. It's fun because when you have the opportunity to coach at the University of Alabama, you see the success across the sport programs. When you see Patrick Murphy, Coach Saban, now Coach DeBoer, you see Sarah Patterson, and now Coach Johnson, it's so contagious. Association brings on assimilation. So much support for each program. It's really, really special to be a part of that group of coaches who truly care about everyone being successful.

I think the biggest thing I'm looking forward to is the new facility. We will be in the same practice facility, brand-new locker rooms, offices, overseeing the floor. It will be best in the league. Being in the same building and being able to be right there, I think it's going to be really special for both programs. It's a game changer for us.

Q. Will you talk to me about the addition of Pauline Love to your staff.

KRISTY CURRY: Unbelievable. She is one of the most passionate, hard-working, amazing role model. Tried to hire her a couple times. She finally said yes. I'm getting a lot nor yeses now.

I'm proud to have her part of our program. She brings so much energy and passion on the floor. It's genuine. She's



so genuine and passionate. Tremendous recruiter. Watched her as a player. I tell you what, when you have someone every single day that's coaching young women and can say I went through what you're going through, I understand where you're coming from, I lived it.

She and Tennille Adams. Tennille played at Arkansas in the SEC. Pauline had an amazing Hall of Fame career at Southern Miss. I'm blessed to have those two that have played and understand what it takes, can translate each and every day.

Coach knows what she's talking about. It's amazing to have her energy, her passion, her expertise, her experience, her SEC experience. It was a huge hire for us.

Q. Your athletic director, Greg Byrne, he talked about the importance of this facility, what it's going to do. What does that commitment mean?

KRISTY CURRY: Yes, I mean, his commitment is unbelievable. Obviously Greg didn't hire me, but I can't put into words how much he loves and supports. How many times do you look up and all your games, there's Greg? How many times does he help us in recruiting and never says no? A text after the game, encouragement. He knows every one of our players' names. He and Regina had our team for dinner the other week. He is different.

And I loved Coach Battle. He was amazing. Actually messaged me this week.

I've been so blessed throughout my career to have amazing, supportive athletic directors at all of my stops. I really mean that.

But Greg is special. He's on the forefront of everything that's happening in college athletics as a dynamic leader, one of the most passionate people.

I work hard every day to make sure I don't let him down because he's embraced our culture, our beliefs. He has said, We're going to give you what you need to be successful and continue to elevate the program.

I think the new facility is a perfect example that he means what he says, so I appreciate it.

Q. You're going to miss having Jessica Timmons on the floor this year. Can you talk about some of the special things she's doing away from basketball.

KRISTY CURRY: Absolutely. That was a big blow to our program, to lose Jess in the SEC tourney with ACL against Tennessee.

She has done an unbelievable job on her comeback and recovery. She actually has just been released for some contact. She's so far ahead. We're going to redshirt her. That's her wishes. We're going to work on that Masters degree.

She just finished a leadership conference for women's sports leaders up in Baltimore. It's going to give her a chance to do some internships, work in some other areas, but continue to heal and grow.

I'm telling you right now, she will be one of the best backcourt leaders and guards in the country next year. Her shots are unbelievable. She's far ahead of schedule. She won't play. We'll support her academics, all the things she wants to do to continue to grow as a person.

She's doing a lot for us. I'm going to have her sitting right on the bench, backcourt point guard, two-guard mentality. She is very vocal in practice. She's one of our leaders.

I don't think that role will do anything but grow because of the position. She'll be able to see the game from a different light. I think Jess is a really special individual. Made a huge impact.

I feel really good about Zaay Green and Diana Collins and great our about our freshmen being able to come in and fill that void.

Q. One of the other transfer additions you added was Christabel Ezumah. Talk about what you've seen from her.

KRISTY CURRY: We feel like going into this season there were two areas we really had to improve. One of those was defensive rebounding and offensive rebounding. She brings that. She's experienced, fifth-year, averaged near a double-double at Campbell. Had a lot of success in that league.

She's so aggressive and physical, tremendous screener. She's picked up on things quickly, our system and style of play. She's relentless on the glass. Does a great job of finishing around the rim.

You have JeAnna Cunningham coming back. Naomi Jones is recovering from injury. When you can add those three bigs, it gives us size and athleticism. You can move Essence Cody and her versatility to the floor, who has much improved. I mean really special all-SEC freshmen.

C.B. adds a lot of depth that we didn't have a year ago and I'm excited for her.

Q. The tournament is coming to Birmingham. That must excite you.

JONI TAYLOR: Absolutely excites me. We want to be in it, right? We want to be playing in Birmingham.

The city of Birmingham and downtown Birmingham, Legacy Arena, have done an unbelievable job with the renovations and the support. Our state tournament is in Birmingham.

Having the opportunity to go the past 11 years, see the growth, I think it's really exciting to have the G League team in town. I know our men are going to be playing.

Just the way the city of Birmingham and Legacy Arena, a beautiful facility with the renovation. Pretty before, but so nice now. So many restaurants, great environment for women's basketball to be coming to downtown Birmingham.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

JONI TAYLOR: Thank you for your support of women's basketball and the SEC. Thank you for all you do and Roll Tide.

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