

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Missouri Tigers

Coach Robin Pingeton

Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Robin Pingeton to the stage from the University of Missouri.

ROBIN PINGETON: Thank you. I want to thank you guys. I know it's been a busy two days. You have been just troopers. We're closing in on the end of day two. But appreciate the work that you guys do, the stories that are told through these opportunities.

We're excited for the season. We've got a lot of new faces, a lot of new names. Going into this off-season we thought it was really important that we added a couple key pieces out of that roster which would include some athleticism, some size.

I feel very blessed that we're returning a really special core group. I think Aston Judd and Grace Slaughter are here with us today, but two of the several that after a tough year decided they wanted to come back and didn't waver. I think in this day and age, that's a difficult thing to do. I'm really proud of 'em and grateful.

Last year, not the year we wanted. Two starters that went down with season-ending injuries that made it a really tough year for us in a tough league.

It's been a great off-season. I'm excited about our roster. I said this several times. I think we have an uncommon work ethic. Very like-minded. I think young ladies that really have come together in regards to a connectivity in that locker room with a vision that's pretty uncommon for a group of so many new players.

It's been fun to see them come together. I know we're excited for what's in front of us. It's going to be here soon before we know it. Exciting time of the year. Appreciate the opportunity to be out here in front of you guys.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. You mentioned some of the transfers. Wondering about Tionna Herron and how you've seen her settle in.

ROBIN PINGETON: Yeah, Tree has had a tough journey. Obviously a really talented high school player. When she got to Kentucky, had some heart issues. Had surgery. Didn't allow her to really get back into the swing of things at Kentucky. Transferred to Texas. I think that year for her was the year of great growth, but also just challenging, trying to get her feet wet again and get acclimated to the game. It's hard to sit out for a year.

She's been a great addition. She's got size, good athleticism. I've been pleased with the growth that we've seen in her game since she's been on campus, coming in in June. One of our big focuses was to try to get her in better physical shape. She's worked really hard at that. She's got good touch around the rim. I think she can make a difference on the defensive end, alter shots defensively. Been impressed with her footwork. I'm excited about the growth that I've seen in three or four short months.

Q. Wanted to ask you about the addition of Nyah Wilson.

ROBIN PINGETON: Really excited about Nyah, too. I've said this before. I think a lot of times in recruiting, especially in the portal, it's almost like speed dating. You can do all the research you want, make as many phone calls as you can, try to really understand who these young ladies are. Sometimes you've recruited them previously, but sometimes you haven't.

You never really know for sure what you're going to get because that window is so small. We've been so blessed, the young ladies that have joined our program are exactly who we thought they would be. Nyah has been tremendous. She's got a great work ethic. She's got great athleticism. She can push the ball in transition. She has the ability to guard 90 feet from the basket. She can play both the point and off guard position. We're really looking for her to play a big role for us this upcoming season.



Q. You've been up in this league, you've been down in this league. Is it much easier to fall -- you have injuries, players that leave -- than it is to build back up, given the competitive level of the league?

ROBIN PINGETON: Yeah, that's a great question.

I think it's all of the above. I mean, I think two things can be true at once, right? I think it's really hard to climb. When injuries hit, you don't prepare for them.

I've gone back and forth as a coach. There's times where I think a 12-man roster or 12-player roster, the chemistry in that locker room can be a little bit stronger, you don't have to worry about playing time. Then you have a couple key injuries, and you think, I'm never going back to that again, we will always be at full strength.

But we did have a couple tough seasons. We've had some seasons that have been really exciting, playing on a big stage under bright lights, a lot of success in the SEC.

This is a very tough league. We have Texas and Oklahoma, two programs that I have a lot of respect for, joining the league. A tough league. If possible, just got tougher.

I think that's what makes it so fun. We all want the end result, which is a championship. We all want a deep run in the NCAA tournament. That scoreboard is really, really important. But I also don't want to shy away from the fact that sometimes when you go through hard times, those are really where you grow the most. I'm so proud of the resiliency and the resolve of these young ladies and the fact that they believe in our program and our culture.

We're willing to come back and stay committed to what our hopes and dreams have been as we continue to elevate our program back up in a tough league.

I don't shy away from any of it. I think the good is good and the hard can be really good for you, too.

Q. We're going to have your players in here shortly. Can you say a few words about your players.

ROBIN PINGETON: We'll start with Grace Slaughter, a sophomore. She's a young lady that grew up coming to basketball camps at Missouri. I've known her since she was this tall. Fun to see her grow and blossom. She was a USA Basketball young lady, then had a knee injury in high school. She had to recover from that.

She's passionate about the game. Has an unbelievable work ethic. Just a very disciplined young lady. Not only is

she really good in the classroom, but I think her commitment to giving back in our community is something that I really admire and appreciate.

Her skill set on the court. I think going into this season, a point of emphasis for her was to really get better on the defensive end. She's always been pretty strong with her offensive skill set, but really wanted to grow her game defensively. I've seen her really put that work in. I think she's going to have another really special year for us.

Ashton Judd, to me she's kind of got that 'it' factor. A little bit of an alpha on the court. She plays really, really hard. She's gritty. She's tough. She's really resilient. She's been a really good leader for so many of our new players. I know they look up to her not only because of her character but just her work ethic on and off the court. Two ladies we're counting on this season to elevate us and help put us back on the map.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

ROBIN PINGETON: Thank you. Thanks again for everything you guys do. Appreciate you.

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