

# Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

**Texas Longhorns**

**Coach Vic Schaefer**

Women's Media Day Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We welcome Vic Schaefer to the podium, head coach at the University of Texas.

VIC SCHAEFER: Something I've come accustomed to doing, been fortunate to be able to do this a lot. Honored to be here. Honored to be the head coach at the University of Texas, obviously being in this incredible conference.

Excited about our team this year. Tuesdays and Thursdays are morning workout times, so we've already practiced today. We've had 15 practices. Just really looking forward to seeing what this team can become.

Every team is different. Certainly we lost some really good players off of last year's team that set a record at Texas for the NCAA era, winning 35 games, obviously making it to the Final Four. Very special.

Again, hard sometimes to replace what you lose. I really love what we did with our freshman class, with Aaliyah Crump, then our three kids out of the portal, Brea Cunningham, Ashton Judd and Teya Sidberry from Boston College. Add those in with our returners, I really think we've got a chance. That's all we've got. We've got to go live it and prove it.

When you have to prove it in this league, you can navigate the gauntlet of a 16-game season in the SEC, then combine that with our non-conference schedule where we have the chance, opportunity to maybe play South Carolina again in non-conference, as well as opening with UCLA. We also have North Carolina, who I think is pre-season No. 11, and a Richmond team ranked in the top 25.

We've got plenty of schedule, so...

Again, looking forward to this team. Obviously when you start a team with a Rori Harmon and a Madison Booker out on the perimeter, that's a great place to start. This will be

Rori's fifth year with me. Really, again, it's that second year coming off an injury that kids really get comfortable and get back to their old self. I thought she had a great year last year. Obviously she's an Honorable Mention All-American again. I think this year will be a really great year for her.

Booker has been amazing. She's so mature, has really grown. As a junior now, has taken on some leadership responsibilities that I really want her to do.

Then Kyla Oldacre, our young lady who came off the bench last year behind Taylor Jones, who was an All-American, as well, I think she's going to have a great year, as well.

If I had to bring up another player or two, it would be Jordan, who I think has really had a great, great summer and a great fall for us. I think she's going to be a great option for us on the wing opposite Book.

We have really great competition right now at the four with Justice Carlton returning as a sophomore, then Ashton Judd and Teya Sidberry, our two senior transfers.

Again, we've added Aaliyah Crump, who can really shoot it, really can play offensively. She's a typical freshman learning the defensive piece, but she will. She stays in every drill. Have to ask her to get off. She's learning that role.

Then you have Bry Preston. Rori is fast. Bry is electric. I'm excited, just excited about that group, what they bring to the table, so...

Questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. It goes without saying the impact of Madison and Rori. Your now sophomores in Jordan Lee and Bryanna Preston. What do you expect them to take the next step in terms of their evolution and growth?**

VIC SCHAEFER: I think those two kids, man, they're really

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exciting to watch play. You're right, they had a big impact in our run late in the year.

Preston played big minutes for us down the stretch. Jordan Lee was obviously on the All-Freshmen team. I think those two are ready to be big impact players for us this year.

Like I said, when you're watching practice and you know how fast and explosive Rori can be, but, man, Bry Preston is electric. She's got a different gear sometimes than anybody I've ever seen.

I'm excited about those two.

Again, Justice, our other sophomore, she's battling some tendinitis right now. Just getting her to understand the speed of the game. If I can ever get her to play both ends equally as hard, with equal focus, that kid can really impact our team.

I think those three sophomores, man, I love 'em. I think they bring a lot to the table. They've had good practices to date.

**Q. What led you to play in this game in Las Vegas against UCLA?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I think you probably know. It's a game, the new era event, where we're going to be able to make some money for NIL for our players.

Look, I'll play the Boston Celtics best out of seven for \$1 million. Probably only be four games, but that would be all right.

Nevertheless, it's a great opportunity for our kids to play on a national stage against four of the top-seven teams in the pre-season polls. It will get your attention in a hurry. You got to be ready early.

For us, I think it's a great opportunity. Again, much like our football team going to Ohio State, playing that opening game, our men's basketball is doing something very similar, we're going to do it, as well.

Again, my kids, they'd rather be in those games, to be honest with you. For me as a coach, when you're wanting to bring along some freshmen or some younger kids, even some new additions that you're trying to get into your system, like a senior who has been in a different system for three years, might like playing some of those other teams. At the end of the day my kids, I'll have their attention going into those games.

That's what you want. Again, I think you're a different team in November to February. I don't know how much it gets you ready for February. At the same time I think our kids will be excited about it. I know our fans will be. You got to add them playing North Carolina in the ACC-SEC Challenge. We're going to be loaded up early.

That event is a great event. We certainly appreciate the opportunity to be in that event.

**Q. What's the best piece of advice you've received throughout your coaching career?**

VIC SCHAEFER: I've talked about this a lot. Commissioner and I got to know each other back in the '90s when I was at Sam Houston State and he was in the Southland Conference.

Most everybody knows the story, but I'll tell it again. I got the job in 1990 at Sam Houston State. I'm no more ready for that job than the man on the moon. Don't have a contact one in the women's game. I've never been a head coach. I'm going to a school that is trying to go Division I but yet still has a Division II budget and Division II mentality, to be honest.

We're just trying to survive.

My first three years were pretty rough. I think we were 11-16, 9-18. My third year was 6-20. Did it with a bunch of freshmen. Really, really struggling.

That's when I met my wife Holly. She gave me some good advice one day early in our relationship. It's simply this: If they don't like you, they're not going to play hard for you.

I think the value in that as a coach, and it wouldn't matter if I walked across the hall today and coached the men, I just think kids need to know you care about 'em. That was her message. If they know you, they love you, they know that you love 'em and you care about 'em, you can get 'em to play really hard for you.

I think anybody that knows my teams over the years, the biggest compliment I get is that, Man, Vic, your kids play really hard.

Y'all, after a game, win or lose, if I know we played our guts out, I'm good. The outcome is really secondary in my mind. If I know we absolutely played our guts out, I'm good.

That piece of advice changed me along with the other piece, which was stop worrying about things you cannot control. I think that's the second thing that I tell coaches



when I'm talking to 'em about things. I wasted way too much time on how much money Gary Blair had at Stephen F. Austin. They were our, quote/unquote, rival. Hard to have a rivalry when you're getting your butt beat every time you're playing somebody.

He had the biggest salary, a full-time staff. I had one GA. My budget was \$20,574. That was for everything -- team travel, officials, recruiting, telephone, postage. I can tell you in 1991, my budget was \$20,574. Again, stop worrying about what you can't control. I can't control that. I can't control I don't have a staff. Just do the best you can with what you got.

Once I stopped worrying about that and I took her advice, my career changed. Two years later I'm Coach of the Year in the league. Two years after that I go to Arkansas with Coach Blair. The rest is history. It's been a blur.

You think about it, I was just in the pilots room, pilots happen to be from the University of Arkansas, they had to excuse me, let me come in there and change. I did coach at Arkansas six years, so I appreciate the kindness of letting me borrow the room.

It's just been a blur from there.

But to answer your question, I think those are two things that I've tried to live by and live with every day. Again, that doesn't mean I don't apologize for being demanding. Our kids understand the love that we have for them. Part of that love is discipline and accountability. That's the best thing you can give your child if you're a parent. They see that, I know they see that in me and my staff, we try to give that to them, as well.

**Q. Madison Booker, what she's done in two short years, you've coached a lot of great players, what do you think sets her apart? What does she do different than some of the other great players you've had the opportunity to coach?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I think there's a couple things.

I think when you're as good as she is, there's more than just one thing. With Madison, she's so cerebral as a player. She's very unselfish. She enjoys the assist as much as the bucket.

If you were to see her right now, she is a pro. I'm not talking about a pro player. Her skill set is going to be great at that level when this comes, but she's a pro in how she approaches taking care of herself, her body physically, mentally. She's doing a great job right now in my gym being a leader, being positive, being the juice, talking,

communicating. These are things that I've seen in growth with her that maybe she wasn't comfortable doing as a freshman. Most freshmen aren't.

I just think when you look at her total where she is as a human being, as a young woman, the maturity that she has, she's different.

I've coached some great players, y'all, over the course of my career. Been very, very fortunate. I just think, again, she's in the gym early. She's in there with Blair. They're getting shots up every day, every day.

Again, we have something that we talk about a lot, and it's just real simple. The game honors toughness, and you get out of it what you put into it. The game's real fair. You get out of it what you put into it. She puts so much into her game. Everything I just told you.

That ain't easy. For kids, they're kids. You want them to be able to enjoy being young, being on a college campus, do college things. She does that and she does the things that are important for her to be the player that she is. I think that's what has allowed her to separate herself and have the success that she's had.

I'm going to tell y'all, the only thing harder than winning the league is being predicted to win the league. The only thing harder than being Player of the Year is being predicted to be Player of the Year. You're the number one person on the scout sheet every night, every night. That's the first person they're talking about when they start putting together a scouting report on your team. She's the first one.

She did it a year ago, you know? I think when you think about those things and about her and her career, in two short years, I mean, it's quite remarkable. She'll have a chance to be the all-time greatest in the history of the University of Texas. She'll have a chance to set the record for the most points scored in the history of the university. But she'll do that because she puts in the work. She puts in the time.

Again, that's why she's so unique and special. Again, I've coached some great ones. There's one right there on the wall. But Book, Book is different. Again, she's grown and she's so mature right now. She's a great teammate. Like, you have no idea what kind of a kid that kid is. She is a great kid, great teammate. Family raised her right. Mom and dad, auntie, grandma. Because of those folks, she is who she is today.

Again, fortunate to have her with us. Her and Rori are a great place to start when you start thinking about as a team



because they play so well with each other.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach Schaefer.

VIC SCHAEFER: Thank y'all.

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