

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Missouri Tigers

Coach Kellie Harper

Women's Media Day Press Conference



won at different levels. When you come back to it, do you carry that same approach that you've had in previous times into a new chapter?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, I think as a coach, I've always wanted to grow and learn. For me, pick and choose things from my previous experiences that work and things that didn't work and try to keep moving forward.

I think one of the really exciting things for me this year, the staff that we were able to put together has been tremendous in our chemistry and our connection. The experience that our staff has working together, bouncing off ideas, really trying to fit this puzzle together as best we can.

We want to put our players in our program in the best possible position for success. That requires us working together every day and drawing from all of our previous experiences.

I think we all have an idea of how it needs to go, but we have to be flexible to make changes where we need to.

Q. When you talk about wanting to grow with this team, what do you feel are some of the bigger learning curves with this group?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I think when you are new, we have a new staff, all the players are new to us, I think everything is learning. We are putting in a system. We're putting in offensive packages, defensive packages. Every single day is a teaching moment for them.

I mean, half the drills that we're doing are new for them. So we're learning a lot of terminology together. We're learning what we do well as a team together. I think there's going to be a lot of growth to be had.

I haven't experienced a game setting with them yet. There's going to be a learning curve there. I think for us, translating practice to game is going to be really important early on. Like I said, they're working really hard. I'm really proud of their effort, proud of their focus, and their want to. They're very driven. That's a very driven group. We want

THE MODERATOR: We continue with Kellie Harper from the University of Missouri.

KELLIE HARPER: All right. Really excited to be back here and representing Mizzou. We're really looking forward to the competition and the challenge of this league. Think you have to embrace that. Our players do.

As we continue to grow and we continue to compete, we will continue to bring in players that see our vision, and competing at the highest level is part of that.

I've really, really enjoyed working with our team. There's a toughness piece and there's a grit to this group. We just want to see how much we can grow together as a team and also on the court this season.

THE MODERATOR: If you have a question...

Q. What's your process, if there is one, for setting an expectation for yourself and this team?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, I think sometimes that can be really challenging. There's so many things out of your control, right? So I think what we have to do is control what we can control. For us, that's how we go about our business every day.

We talk about this with our team every single day when we walk off the court, we want to be better at something. We want to be a better basketball team.

I just really have enjoyed the journey with this group and want to continue to do that. As we go, as we get a little bit further, yeah, we can maybe set some goals out there for this team. Right now we're trying to be the best we can possibly be and see where that takes us.

Q. Obviously you're an established coach. You've

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to try to capitalize on that and try to push them every day.

They're such a nice group of kids, they really are (smiling). Sometimes you have to be reminded as a coach to push them even more 'cause they'll give you everything they've got.

Q. What was it about Missouri that attracted you to that job and told you that was the right place for you?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, there were several things. First, I think the people. You want to be around people that share your vision, your vision for your program. I felt that in particular with our athletic director, Laird Veatch. I felt the support there. Specifically not just for the athletic department but for women's basketball.

I had lived in the state for six years at a previous institution. I worked at Missouri State. I felt really confident in being able to recruit that region. We want to be able to tackle the state and the region. Thought that was really important.

I also felt like because of my history there, I felt like I was going to be able to bring in the perfect staff for Mizzou. I was able to do that. I hit a home run there, for sure.

Then the last thing, I'll be honest with you, this, the SEC. I mean, I want to be part of the best. I embrace the competition. I embrace the challenge. I'm very familiar with what we're up against. I get it.

There's something to that. This is home for me.

Q. You obviously have experience coaching in the SEC at Tennessee. How is that informing you as you take on a new program, going into a rebuild at Mizzou?

KELLIE HARPER: I think just the experience I've had in the league, both coaching and then, I'll be honest with you, doing television this past year I think kept me involved. I'm very familiar with the coaches in this league, very familiar with the players in this league. Although, things do change yearly now when you're looking at rosters.

I think the biggest thing is I understand how difficult this is. I get it. I'm not new to that. This league is different. The competitiveness and the intensity of the games night in and night out for the duration of the season is hard to process until you're in the middle of it.

I do think having that experience and understanding exactly what we're up against is really important for our team.

Q. What are some of the attributes in this day and age

of the transfer portal that fit your program?

KELLIE HARPER: That's a great question.

Obviously, like everyone, we're looking for talented players. There's no doubt about it. You want talent. But we also have to have another layer that is a fit for us. I think that is so important.

We want winners. We want players that are tough. We want players that have a passion for the game. I think for us, intelligent basketball players.

Those are all intangibles. That doesn't mean -- hey, I'd like a 6'2" at a lot of positions. I would love some size and athleticism and speed. But I'm telling you, if we don't get those other qualities, it's not going to work for us. We have to get the intangibles. We have to have winners. We have to have winners that love Mizzou and love the opportunity we're giving them, the platform that is the SEC. They have to embrace that. There are a lot of intangibles.

When you're doing transfer or portal recruiting, you got to figure all that out in a very short amount of time. I think our staff was able to do that this year.

Q. You have seven transfer players. Of those seven, which do you envision taking more of an immediate role?

KELLIE HARPER: All of our players are going to have to help us this year. We're definitely going to need everyone to bring something - everyone. Everyone has to step up and bring something to the table for our basketball team.

Gosh, I hate to even call anybody out because, like I said, they are going to be very important.

Jordana Reisma right now is going to have to come in and help us in the paint.

Shannon Dowell is bringing us some perimeter athleticism that we're looking for. We're also going to get that. We're going to get some shooting from Chloe Sotell. Jayla Smith is going to bring some athleticism, as well.

I think we're really excited about who we have and how they're going to be able to help us.

Q. You mentioned working with SEC Network last season. What did you take most from that from a different lens?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, this past year when I was sitting behind the desk watching the games, instead of in front of



my laptop scouting the games, I was able to actually appreciate what these teams and coaches do well. I was able to embrace the athleticism, embrace the coaching abilities, embrace the play that we have in this league. It was really fun to celebrate that, instead of trying to figure out how you're going to beat it. It was a nice change.

We as coaches don't often get to do that. We're so competitive. You rarely take that coaching hat off and just sit back and appreciate and celebrate the play. That was a lot of fun for me.

The other thing that it did, it kept me so involved in the game that I was ready to get back (smiling). I enjoyed looking at it in a different lens, but also there are some things that are just meant to be. I just feel like I'm meant to coach basketball.

I think being behind the desk pushed me even more to getting back out on the court.

Q. I got a chance to peek in on practice the other day. You mentioned the teaching going on. The other thing I noticed was there was a lot of up-and-down forecourt stuff. Was that just the day I was there, or is that something that's been consistent?

KELLIE HARPER: It's been very consistent. We feel like our brand of basketball needs to be a faster pace for us to be successful.

We put a lot of thought into our program identity as a staff. We wanted to make sure what we landed on was going to give our players the greatest opportunity for success every night out, whether we were in non-conference play or conference play.

We do want to play fast. A lot of people hear that, you think, How fast can you run up and down the floor? That's part of it. What we're also trying to do is teach our players how to think quickly, how to react quickly, how to make reads quickly.

I think that is where our playing fast should help us down the road.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Harper, thank you for your time this afternoon.

KELLIE HARPER: Thank you.

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