

Louisiana State University Women's Basketball Media Conference

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Lady Tigers Press Conference

Mary Werner

LSU Board of Supervisors

Tom Galligan

LSU Interim President

Scott Woodward

LSU Athletic Director

Kim Mulkey

LSU Women's Basketball Head Coach



and a half, welcome LSU interim president Tom Galligan.

TOM GALLIGAN: Good afternoon and welcome. I appreciate all of you joining us today as we introduce our new women's basketball head coach Kim Mulkey. I want to add my thanks to Governor Edwards for you being here, Kim Hunter Reed. Heck, I want to thank you all for being here because it is a wonderful day.

Governor I never take my mask off, but I'm going to take my mask off today.

Before I go on, I do want to thank Coach Fargas for her great service to LSU and wish her all the best in her future endeavors. Thank you, coach.

Well, Coach Mulkey needs no introduction. She is one of a kind. A three-time national champion as a head coach, a two-time national champion as a player, and a member of nine Halls of Fame. And she will be inducted by Michael Jordan into the Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame next month.

Coach Mulkey was the fastest coach, man or woman, ever to reach 600 wins in Division I history. But Coach Mulkey's impact extends far beyond the basketball court. In her tenure as head coach, 100% of the many players who started and completed their careers with her graduated.

At LSU she will develop, guide and lead student-athletes who leave our university with a world class education. She has demonstrated throughout her career the ability of athletics to advance and unite the entire institution.

She will represent LSU as a passionate ambassador of our university on a national and even international stage. She will be a valuable asset to LSU through the pride she displays and the standards she sets on the court and just as importantly off the court.

Coach Mulkey represents the very best of Louisiana. We are fired up to welcome her back to her home state and to LSU.

Friends, one of the most accomplished and respected coaches in American sports history is now a Tiger. The future is incredibly bright for LSU's women's basketball and for our entire athletic program and university. To use a

THE MODERATOR: Tiger fans, please welcome home to the great state of Louisiana, coach Kim Mulkey.

Thank you all so much for joining us today on what is without a doubt one of the most significant days in the history of LSU athletics. When you look at these banners on the ceiling of the Pete Maravich Assembly Center, you look at the tremendous legacy that has been created for women's basketball here. Today we are going to enhance that tremendous legacy.

These young ladies sitting in front of me, these young ladies will continue that legacy with their new head coach. We can't wait for them to get started.

Just a brief summary of our format for today. First of all, we'll have a number of guest speakers joining us that I know you all love to hear from. We'll also have a press conference after Coach Mulkey gives her remarks. We'll look forward to that as well.

I want to recognize a number of dignitaries with us. We'd like first of all to welcome the chairman of the LSU board of supervisors, Mr. Robert Dampf. We're also honored to have with us the Louisiana commissioner of higher education, Dr. Kim Hunter Reed. We are pleased to have with us today Louisiana governor John Bel Edwards.

We'll begin with our first guest speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you a gentleman who has directed our university in such an incredible fashion for the past year



pandemic appropriate metaphor: Today is a shot in the arm for LSU, and the reaction is positive.

I'll now turn the microphone over to Mary Werner, who serves as the athletics committee chair on the LSU Board of Supervisors.

Mary.

MARY WERNER: Thank you, President Galligan.

On behalf of the LSU Board of Supervisors, I'm so proud to say welcome home Coach Mulkey. Today is a homecoming for Kim, who grew up just down the road in Tickfaw, and spent the first 38 years of her life here in Louisiana. I'm not sure how we let you get away, but I am so thrilled that we've gotten you back.

We love making history here at LSU. This is definitely an historic day. With three national championships, 23 regular-season and conference tournament championships, and a home awaiting her, as Tom said, in the Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame this month, Coach Mulkey's résumé is unlike any other coach we have ever welcomed to LSU.

One of her childhood friends happens to be sitting here in the audience. He knows, like we do, that she's been making history all of her life. As a 12-year-old, she was the only girl competing on a Dixie League baseball team where she made the All-Star team. Girls, I want you to remember that. You can do anything you want to.

In high school, she led her Hammond High team to four straight basketball state championships. As a college player, she led her team to the very first NCAA women's national championship in 1982. In 1984, she then helped lead the United States to our first ever Olympic gold medal in women's basketball.

In 2005, she became the first person ever to win an NCAA championship as a player, an assistant coach, and as a head coach. As Tom said, last year she became the fastest coach to win 600 games in Division I men's or women's basketball.

We aren't just welcoming home one of our own today, a winner, but we are welcoming home a trail blazer. Coach Mulkey, we can't wait to see what you have in store for history here at LSU.

Now, on behalf of all of LSU and the Board of Supervisors, I'd like to present you with a little something. Coach Mulkey, this is the LSU win bar.

Now I'd like to introduce the LSU athletic director, Scott Woodward.

SCOTT WOODWARD: Welcome, everyone. This is truly a great day for LSU athletics and, Governor, for the state of Louisiana. Kim, I know Michael Jordan will be introducing you in the Naismith Hall of Fame next month, but you'll have to settle for me today.

I'm flabbergasted by this excitement, what we have today. I want to thank everyone for being here as we welcome Kim and her family home. Included in her family is her daughter Makenzie. Makenzie's wonderful husband Clay Fuller. Their wonderful son Kannon, checking out the scoreboard. Of course, as I was teasing Coach Mulkey earlier, she's got real big shoes to fill here at LSU, with her son Kramer having been a baseball great here.

Thank you all for being here, all the family and friends of Coach Mulkey, it really means a great deal to us. It affects us from the bottom of our hearts. We're excited about it.

Before I go on, I really want to mention three people or organizations who are really the unsung heroes on this. This is unscripted. Really coach D-D Breaux for being relentless in helping convince Coach Mulkey this was her home to come back to.

Our senior administrator and deputy, Stephanie Rempe who makes it all happen. I'm just a titular head.

Then finally an organization who always answers the call to do anything and be there all the time, and that's the Bengal Belles. Thank you so much.

One of the challenges that comes with the job of being athletics director is making difficult decisions. Frankly, this was not one of them. There are great coaches all over this country, but it's not every day you get to hire a champion. That's exactly what Kim Mulkey is, a champion, period.

At LSU we've watched from down the road as she won four state championships at Hammond High School, where she was also her school's valedictorian. We have watched from down the road as she won two national championships as a player and another as an assistant coach. We have watched from down the road as she has won three national championships as a head coach. The next championship Coach Mulkey wins we all will be watching from the front row here.

As impressive as her past accomplishments are, I believe Coach Mulkey is just getting started. What you learn pretty quickly when listening to her is that she has a championship mentality in everything she does. She wants



to win on the court, in the classroom and in the community.
That's who she is. That's who LSU is.

LSU's elite coaches and student-athletes who pursue victory relentlessly, and leave championship legacies in all the wakes of their lives. If you play for Kim, you will finish your career with a diploma in one hand there's a pretty darn good chance you'll finish with a championship ring on the other.

LSU is its people and its fans. We are unrivaled in our passion and our pride. Our traditions begin and bring us together, and our culture sets us apart. That's who Kim Mulkey is. She's the most passionate coach in the country. She's the most authentic coach in the country. She instills pride in her players, her program and her institution.

Most importantly LSU is home. It's my home. It's your home. It's our home. That's where Kim Mulkey is now. The best coach in the country is coming home to Louisiana.

On behalf of all the Tigers in the world, it is my honor to welcome home the head coach of our LSU Tigers, coach Kim Mulkey.

KIM MULKEY: Thank you. Where are all those Tangipahoa Parish people? Well, I'm going to take this damn mask off because I have a lot to say.

First of all, Kramer's mom has come home. I would like to thank the administration at LSU. While I don't know all of you personally, I want to thank everybody that made this happen. This doesn't just happen with a phone call. It takes a lot of people pulling a lot of strings and committing to women's basketball.

I've been at Baylor 21 years of my life. I built that program from the ground up. I should say we built that program from the ground up. Can you believe there's only one institution I would have left for, and they made the commitment, and I'm home.

I, too, would like to thank Scott. Scott talks my language. It took a 10-minute phone call from him to get me to come to LSU. Then like all great athletic directors and leaders, they have to have people and women around them that are smarter than they are, right?

Stephanie, where are you? You better stay at LSU awhile, girl, because you did all the work to get me here. You showed me the numbers, talked to me, got me through all the emotional moments. Thank you.

D-D Breaux, where are you? She could sell ice to an

Eskimo. Thank you, D-D.

Paul Mainieri, where are you? Paul, you took a cocky little boy and made him a man. To you I'm forever grateful.

I'm not sure what other coaches are here. Forgive me if I know you're here and I don't acknowledge you.

I'd like to talk about Governor John Bel Edwards. John Bel is not as good looking as his daddy Frank was, nor was he as smart as his mama, who worked at Lallie Kemp Charitable Hospital in Independence.

When you grow up, you don't forget where you come from. Two people who grew up in Tangipahoa Parish, on opposite ends, grew up during integration. Where did he go to school? He went to the schools (indiscernible) public schools. Where did Kim Mulkey go? She went to all the schools in Hammond. Somewhere in between there, they knew where Tickfaw was, where Independence was, where Ponchatoula was. They knew their parish because that parish made us who we are. This state made us who we were.

I appreciate you being here. I appreciate what you mean to the state of Louisiana. Your brother Daniel is now the sheriff. His wife is a judge. It's just so incredibly comfortable for me to come back to my roots. Thank you, John Bel.

I would like the current women's Tiger basketball team to stand up, please. I want you to see those banners behind you right there. Final Four, Final Four, Final Four, Final Four. Nowhere on there does it say national champion. That's what I came here to do.

You may be seated. I like them already (laughter).

In talking about national championships, it doesn't happen overnight. Let me remind you rabid LSU fans that can be crazy and want coaches fired tomorrow, give it time, give it time. But I can assure you that's what I came here to do.

I'd like to also introduce my family, which has been introduced, but I can't go without acknowledging it. My mom, Dru (phonetic), still lives in Hammond in Tangipahoa Parish. My daughter Makenzie and her husband Clay, my grandson Kannon, and Makenzie has a granddaughter in that belly that will pop out here in a couple months, Sage Avery.

Oh, I almost forgot, I have a son. Kramer, is that you? Kramer Robertson all the way here from St. Louis and the Cardinals baseball organization.



Have I said lately, it's good to be back home? When I left north Louisiana 21 years ago, I took a job in Waco. I was on a mission. My very first head coaching job. Spent 19 years of my life in Ruston, Louisiana. We won 23 Big 12 championships, including regular season and tournament. We won three national championships. We graduated every player that ever finished in a uniform for me.

I had many opportunities to leave. This is the only one that could get me to leave. Thank you, again, for bringing me back home.

LSU is a very, very prideful institution of higher learning. You know what it feels like to win championships. You know what it means to a community and to a state when you're a winning program. I know what it means. I can assure you I didn't just come here to win championships, I came here to make an impact at the right time at an institution that needs something really positive.

I came back to my home state. If you have followed my career, I've said it numerous times, no matter where I go to coach, no matter where my career takes me, Louisiana is my home.

I can't wait to eat some Tangipahoa strawberries. I can't wait to have some crawfish. You think I'm being funny, but it's just the God's truth. I miss my food from Louisiana.

I can now tell Boudreau and Thibodeau jokes and people don't look at me like I've lost my mind (laughter).

Be patient, understand it will not happen overnight. Raise your hand if you have already put a deposit down for your season tickets. Now I'm going to put you on the spot like a good politician does. Raise your hand if you haven't. Get 'em up, get 'em up. Why not? What are you waiting on? It's the end of the month. You get your paycheck next month. You can put a deposit down right now and buy a season ticket. I heard that just today 600 have already put deposits in for season tickets.

When you are hired to lead a team, sometimes it's teams that have never experienced winning. They don't even know what it feels like. That's not the case with women's basketball at LSU. Those of you who remember Seimone Augustus, Temeka Johnson, Sylvia Fowles, they had the arena rocking, except when they played against Kim Mulkey in the Final Four, right?

I have great admiration for that ladies banner, that woman on that banner right there, Sue Gunter. If I can do what Sue Gunter did for LSU, Scott can't fire me. What a heck of a coach she was.

It's no secret I do coach with passion. I do coach with intensity. But I think I learned that from the great state of Louisiana. We're fighters here. I'm going to fight for my team, I'm going to fight for LSU, and I'm always going to fight and defend the state of Louisiana.

I can't build this program alone. You can forget that. I cannot build it alone. I have to introduce, and I would like them to stand up as you talk and tell you who they are, my staff. Some of them, not all of them, that are going to come here from Baylor with me. Don't pat me on the back, pat those guys on the back, they do all the work. Pat those guys on the back. They will be beating the bushes to bring recruits to LSU.

I'd like to start, Johnny Derrick. He really wants to retire and I won't let him. Johnny Derrick is a Louisiana guy from Dubach, Louisiana.

Jennifer Roberts. Jennifer is a Shreveport, Louisiana girl.

Jordin Westbrook. Jordin is from Indianapolis, Indiana. She's been at Baylor a long, long time. When I tell you she's a jack of all trades, ask Jordin and she can do it before you think about it.

I'd like to introduce Kaylin Rice. Kaylin has an eight-week-old little girl back home. Her 6'8" daddy is taking care. If they don't look like Mutt and Jeff. She's 5'2" and he's 6'8".

Daphne Mitchell. Daphne played her collegiate basketball at Georgia Tech. Daphne, as you can tell, she probably knows a thing or two about post play.

Please welcome them. Please thank them for being here.

To LSU, to you fans, to everybody that loves LSU, we need your help. Don't wait until we start winning to buy your season tickets. You have to help us get to that level of winning.

When the game is close and tight, just one sell-out crowd will help us get there. I'm going to hit you up. You think D-D Breaux has worked you all for 40 years, you ain't seen nothing yet.

I am proud and I am honored to be your next women's basketball coach. Thank you for bringing me home. Thank you for trusting in my abilities. As Coach O says, Go Tigers.

THE MODERATOR: Well take questions.

Q. (Question regarding the 10-minute call with Scott

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Woodward.)

KIM MULKEY: Our conversation lasted maybe 10, no longer than 15 minutes. All he said was, Kim, it's time to come home. I asked him a couple of questions that were very -- it was just more of compassion. I asked him questions about things that I really don't need to share with you, but it was more compassion and care than anything else.

I think Scott and I were on the same page in that it wasn't just about basketball, it was about a lot of things that he thought I could help him with, not just at LSU, but in the state of Louisiana.

It touched home. It touched home with me, and it touched my heart.

Q. Obviously you knew a lot about LSU, being from this part of the state. Your years coming to the games when Kramer was playing baseball, did that influence you at all? Did that plant any kind of seed to think this might be a place where you might like to wind up?

KIM MULKEY: Kramer's influence? Kramer came to LSU because he wanted to play for a national championship. I didn't need to see the crowds at his game to know what LSU was about. You must remember I watched Brad Davis catch that ball against Ole Miss. That is a Tangipahoa Parish guy. I watched Bert Jones quarterback. When you're from Louisiana, you just keep up with sports. So I have an amazing memory when it comes to the history of athletics.

I could name you Dale Brown's five with Ethan Martin, Rudy Macklin, Jordy Hultberg, and the list goes on. You just know sports. I watched my butt get beat by Seimone Augustus in fouls, all those kids, Temeka Johnson. I already knew how special a place it can be. At those baseball games, never, ever did I think I would be at LSU, ever. But I am. I'll say this, God works in mysterious ways.

Q. The roster building that you're going to have to undertake, how will you approach that given the transfer portal and the things that are available to you now? What do you feel is your greatest need? How will you go about tackling that task?

KIM MULKEY: Well, I don't think it's fair to ask me that today because I have not worked with these young ladies. You have three of them that I talked to on a Zoom call today. I did not evaluate their talents before I took this job. That wasn't something that was important to me.

My job is to develop players. My job is to recruit to LSU. I

know the abilities of my coaching staff. That's not all of them. I know what we can do. I don't want you to be misled that you think I can take a team and overnight play for championships. But I can take a team and make them better each day. As we work with them, we will be able to identify strengths and weaknesses, what we need, then head out and go get the best talent we can to represent LSU.

Q. You are a player's coach. What did you tell your girls at Baylor? What was that conversation like with your team here now in Baton Rouge?

KIM MULKEY: What did I tell my players? It's what you can imagine. When you invest in a young person's life and you tell them you're leaving, you feel a great sense of remorse, sadness because they came to an institution because of you and the program that you built.

So you can imagine, it was a many, many tears shed. All I can tell them was I was going home, that I was going home, that I loved them, that I hoped they could understand and not be angry at me. It's just a feeling in my gut that it was time to go home.

What did I tell the current players? They can probably answer that better than I can. I introduced myself to them, my staff to them. In return, I wanted them to introduce themselves.

It wasn't in great detail, it wasn't a big rah-rah speech. It was mainly an introduction. Let's go win some basketball games.

Q. You've spoken multiple times about having the championship coach you here at LSU. What is your first step to building this program towards that?

KIM MULKEY: Well, it's not going to happen overnight. I'm going to repeat that over and over.

I've got to go empty a closet. I got to go pack a house. I got to empty an office. We've got a lot of work to do there in order to get here. Then after you get settled in here, many of them will be home if they're not in summer school. Then you got to get a schedule going, where are they going to be during the summer, can we have individual or team workouts. June 1 comes, you have to hit the road recruiting. It's a lot of things to do. We will do it as quickly as we can, but we won't go and do any shortcuts.

I won't hire a staff if I'm not comfortable just to fill a spot. I want the right people.

Does that help you a little bit (smiling)?

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. LSU hiring somebody of your magnitude, what message do you think it sends to the country not only about LSU athletics but the institution and what direction it's heading?

KIM MULKEY: Well, I want to say this. It's hard for me to hear when you say a coach of my magnitude. I'm very uncomfortable when I hear that. Thank you, but I don't view myself that way. I honestly view myself as that little girl from Tickfaw. I came from humble beginnings. I have been blessed in my life to play with some of the greatest players to ever play this game. I have been coached by legends, Leon Barmore, Pat Summitt. The list goes on.

I was never going to be a coach. My degree is in business administration. I was working on my master's degree at Louisiana Tech. Had received a post-graduate scholarship from the NCAA for graduating summa cum laude, all that stuff. I was going to be a CEO, fly all around the country.

Dr. F. Jay Taylor, then the president at Louisiana Tech, had different plans for me. As I was sitting in class, working on my masters, he sent campus police to the classroom. Naturally you think that it's a bad, tragic situation. The police said, When your class is over, Dr. Taylor would like to see you on the 16th floor of Wylly Tower. I trucked up there, actually I ran up 16 flights of stairs. They convinced me to help Leon Barmore once Sonja Hogg retired to get into coaching.

I have to be honest with you. These guys are going to feel that way just as I did as a player. I wanted no more of Leon Barmore. I was tired of him. I played with him for four years, I was moving on. I loved him, though. It was just time to say, Uh-huh. The man wouldn't take no for an answer. He knew more about what I needed to do in life at that age than I did. 36 years later, this is what I've been meant to do in life.

I think the statement, if I can say this, how do you get a coach to leave an institution that has had so much success? I think that's what everybody's wondering. The first thing you're going to wonder is, God, she got a boatload of money. My boat does not float because of money.

Let me also tell you, my very first paycheck as a coach, head coach, was for \$125,000, and I thought I was the richest kid in the world. All I wanted was resources. I wanted resources that I could sell to young people. I wanted an institution that I could be proud of. I wanted them to leave with a degree in their hand. I wanted the resources to be able to hire staff to make me look good.

Everywhere I've been, those things have happened. Yes, it did take money to get me away from Baylor, but that was not the deciding factor. I can assure you anybody that know me, I'll wear the same warmup in practice for the whole season because I'm too lazy to go spend money and buy something else.

I hope, Scott, that Nike contract you renew, you can save some money on me, give it to somebody that likes to wear Nike. I'll wear the same old stuff every day.

Does that happen answer your question a little bit? Go Tigers.

Q. Could you dive a little bit deeper into your relationship with D-D Breaux, why that brought you here to LSU? Was that a big factor in you wanting to return home?

KIM MULKEY: D-D Breaux, I actually recognized her from afar through the years. I asked D-D this today. D-D, who was your coach at Southeastern in Hammond? Which you all know that's where I'm from. She told me. Yeah, that's who I'm talking about. You knew who D-D Breaux was.

I watched her gymnastics teams on TV. I watched the crowds and how people loved her and loved the program. Did not really know D-D personally, but my God, in the last week I feel like I've known her my whole life.

D-D Breaux talks my language. She talks my language. I will certainly call on her and Paul Mainieri, everybody else that comes across in my path at LSU for help. You say help? Oh, yeah, I need help. I need help. I need help with fans. I need help with administrators. It takes everybody helping and pulling for each other.

I'm one of these that Ed Orgeron may have to throw me off the field because I may go out there and run a tight end play across the middle when he's throwing to the receivers too much. I might go out there and tell Paul Mainieri he's leaving that guy on the mound too long.

But the thing they know, I'm a coach's coach, too. I will defend a coach in a heartbeat. So don't ever come around me talking bad about a coach because you're barking up the wrong tree.

Q. The timing of all this, when did you and LSU start talking to each other? When did you make the decision?

KIM MULKEY: Timing in everybody's life, the timing in your life, is so important. If it doesn't feel right at that time in your life, you don't do it. If it feels right, you do it. That's

another part of why I'm here. Just felt right. The timing in my life, it felt right.

Specifically to answer your question, an introduction phone call was made, let me think, last week early in the week. An offer was made the latter part or the middle of the week. Then I mulled over it and contemplated over it until yesterday afternoon.

I thank Scott, Stephanie, D-D. I know they wanted an answer immediately. Guys, you can't give an answer like that immediately. I wanted to cover all my bases at Baylor. I wanted to visit with my family. I wanted to visit with my team.

Lastly and the decision was announced yesterday. As right after I told my team at Baylor I think the women's basketball team here also was told just about the same time.

Q. We've obviously talked so much about why you're coming here, but I mean, just how difficult was it to wrestle with leaving Baylor after everything you built there?

KIM MULKEY: It was very difficult. My eyes are swollen. My eyes are red. I have had so many sleepless nights. I can't tell you how many hours sleep I've probably had in the last five days, not much. Because when your heart is invested in something so intensely and so passionately, it's hard to let go.

But yet when your heart also says it's time to move on and accept your next challenge, and it's at home. It just kept weighing on me. It kept weighing on me something felt right here. And it just was icing on the cake. That it was LSU.

I would not have left Baylor for any other school. Except LSU. Certainly I had to talk to my staff. The hardest person for me to convince to take this job was Kramer. Y'all believe that right? It took about 10 seconds so I waited to call him last. After the offer was made. I made sure he was the last one I called him.

THE MODERATOR: This is isn't a question as much as I just hate to miss the opportunity. A couple of rows behind Johnny. They brought you a treat they were trying to show you earlier.

KIM MULKEY: They brought me a treat that they're trying to show me earlier. Strawberries!

John Bel can identify with this. I think I've attended every festival along 51 there in Tangipahoa Parish. I'd always go

to Ponchatoula for the strawberry festival then I'd go to Independence for the Little Italy festival. Then I go to Amite for the oyster festival.

So I've had every place on 51. Ironically, I didn't come to Baton Rouge much when I grew up. But Lord I have spent more money and time in Baton Rouge when Kramer was here. So those of you paid a lot of money to eat. Keep your doors open. I love to eat.

Q. Where are you eating first when you leave here?

KIM MULKEY: Well, I don't know. It depends on where they take me. But I can tell you this and I told Scott this. One of the things I miss the most is food from Louisiana. So I have these visions of on Monday, man, I'm going to get a muffuletta. On Tuesday. I'm gonna go get a PO Boy, on Wednesday I'm going to go get some crawfish.

Do you understand people don't think like that unless they grow up here. So to answer your question, probably someone will get me something and hand it to me in a bag and I'll get on the plane heading back and I'll eat whatever it is because it will be so good.

Oh they don't want me to forget about Hi-Ho barbecue in Hammond, now you got it Hi-Ho barbecue. Dressed with sauce.

As Coach Orgeron says, Go Tigers.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports