

# Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Tuesday, October 8, 2024  
Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

**Clemson Tigers**

**Coach Shawn Poppie**

**Tessa Miller**

**Loyal McQueen**

Women's Press Conference



SHAWN POPPIE: I think if you look at it, it mirrors. When we took that program over up in Blacksburg I had been to one NCAA Tournament, if I'm not mistaken in 13, 14 years. You look at the totality of that athletic department, there was a lot of success.

Small college town. A little bit of a military background. That's really what we are at Clemson.

For me, just like Kenny did at Virginia Tech was do we have the resources and the people in place to actually be successful, and that's when that first phone call for me to Graham because everything mirrored what we did.

Now, flip it, and a lot of why I am where I am and have had the success is because of Kenny Brooks, right? It wasn't just Blacksburg, it wasn't just Virginia Tech, now Clemson, and I'm so excited. The blueprint of what he taught me is not changing.

Different personalities as the head coach, but I'm forever grateful to him, and I was able to take that blueprint to Chattanooga and do nothing different at Clemson. Just a different leader.

Super excited. We're going to do things the right way. Culture is important to us. Building people up. There's no doubt we can get it done.

THE MODERATOR: In a couple of different press conferences I've heard you use the terms "reenergize and revitalize." What is it about those two important concepts for you to get Clemson where you want it to be?

SHAWN POPPIE: Yeah, I think that for us we try to be a little bit different with our energy. If you were to walk in our gym around our offices you'll feel the "it" factor, that there's just something different here. It's not a facade. It's not fake. It's the type of people we've brought into our organization, whether it be my staff or whether it be support staff, whether it be our players.

The level of expectations that we're going to try to hold them to with the energy level is no different than us as a

THE MODERATOR: Welcome head coach Shawn Poppie, senior Loyal McQueen and Tessa Miller. Shawn, I'll start with you. You're coming off two great seasons, two SOCON championships. Why the move now to come to Clemson?

SHAWN POPPIE: Yeah, I was very, very fortunate for my two years in Chattanooga. We had a lot of success. We had a chance to bring everyone but one back this upcoming year. There's no plan to move, but when Graham called, Clemson is something I have looked from afar a long, long time.

You look at my history and where I'm from. I spent a lot of time in the upstate of South Carolina. Although I've never been a part of Clemson, you always were a fan for what they were doing. So I listened, right?

Then it didn't take long that they matched everything that I was looking for for an opportunity to come and play in the best women's basketball conference in the country, right, and compete at the highest level. Familiarity obviously during my time at Virginia Tech, but felt like the one thing at Clemson that had been missing, if you look at athletics as a whole at women's basketball programs really reaching its expectations.

It's a challenge, but I think we have everything in place, the people in place, and now it's up to us to get to where we need to be.

THE MODERATOR: Shawn, you mentioned previous stop at Virginia Tech for six years. That was the turnaround period with you and Kenny Brooks to a top ten program. What are some parallels that maybe you see Virginia Tech had when you guys went there to what Clemson has now for you guys to make the jump?



staff. So for us, I believe that we may not have any McDonalds All Americans on the roster, so you better find a way to beat McDonald's All Americans, because there's quite a few in this league.

It's how we go about doing things, loving on one another. There's no better time than your first year. We're still 0-0. The honeymoon phase is coming up here November 4th when games kick off.

You have to take advantage of a rejuvenized fan base in women's basketball, and part of that is showing who we are as people, right? Our energy level, our commitment to not only Clemson women's basketball, but the university as a whole. Getting out into Clemson and sharing our story, getting here and continuing to share stories that I think we have a lot of relatability in our program.

THE MODERATOR: Tessa, your coach just mentioned the "it" factor. What is the "it" factor for Coach Poppie?

TESSA MILLER: I think like he said, just our energy and the winning culture that we're trying to restore back to Clemson. Coach Poppie and the rest of the coaching staff brought together a bunch of winners, and although we're all different, we're very like-minded in the fact that we all have a chip on our shoulder and it's something we want to prove this year.

And we just want to make Clemson basketball exciting again ^ and I think that it factor is something you feel when you watch us more than something I can talk about.

THE MODERATOR: Loyal, what's it mean to you to come back to your home state and finish out your career?

LOYAL McQUEEN: It means everything. The timing was kind of -- the timing is everything. Just coming back to my home state. One thing that me and Coach Poppie talk about all the time is legacy. Just leaving Clemson better than the way that I found it.

I'm just excited for the year, and I'm excited that I got a chance to play for Coach Poppie.

THE MODERATOR: Shawn, you've been out of the league for two years. How much has it changed and evolved in those two years in?

SHAWN POPPIE: Oh, it is a totally different league than I saw a couple of years ago. It's still the best women's basketball league in the country, but you think about just, okay, we have some additions, right? You think about Stanford and Cal and SMU and kind of what the West Coast style brings.

But then the coaching changes, right? There's a lot of new faces in this league. So the last piece of that is just the scheduling part of not only the travel in between games, but the style of play because you are playing everybody one time.

I play South Carolina the same amount of times I played Jeff at Louisville. So timing is going to be everything. Where is that on the schedule? I do think that we have way more different styles now with the addition of three new teams and then the coaches compared to what it was a couple of years ago, but the top is still the top, right?

West is still going to be west of what they've been doing. Obviously Notre Dame and they've been phenomenal the last couple of years. I think some at the top is not different. I have seen front row what that looks like and been able to scout against it.

Then there's a lot of new faces and different styles that we're going to have to adjust to, but also I think with us. Clemson women's basketball is going to play completely different than it has in the last couple of years.

We're trying to get into that conversation of, wow, it's going to be tough to get into Littlejohn and get a W.

THE MODERATOR: Tessa, last season at Belmont you were 20th in the country in field goal percentage. So obviously new league, new teammates, and everything else. What have you added to your game to help prepare?

TESSA MILLER: I think this year just a big thing for me obviously with the transition was learning to play with people like Loyal and learning my teammates better. I don't think I've changed my game, but I have evolved any game to fit the style of the team and my teammates this year, and that's allowed me to move to more of a positionless. I'm not strictly on the block anymore like I was at Belmont last year. I can play out to the four and things like that.

Yeah, just learning how to play off my teammates and stuff and catering my game to them while still growing within myself, so not too much change, but little additions.

THE MODERATOR: The practice season is still relatively new. We've gone all summer long. Loyal, can you speak so some of the off-court activities that have helped you become a better basketball player and a better teammate as well?

LOYAL McQUEEN: I think just finding ways to connect with my teammates off the court. We've had scavenger

hunts. We've done different things. We've had movie night. Just trying to find different ways to get up out of myself and out of my comfort zone to find ways to connect with them so I can find more about them, find out more about them.

I feel like it will correlate on to the court.

SHAWN POPPIE: I need to ask her about four more days from now. We're going to Charleston this upcoming week for a little team bonding, fall break trip. So we'll get back to you next week on what that looks like (laughing).

THE MODERATOR: Shawn, for the new fans out there, we saw what you did in Chattanooga, but what's the style of play going to look like as you transition into the ACC?

SHAWN POPPIE: Yeah, discipline. Discipline on both ends. I think that three-and-D is kind of the thing that people talk about. If you look at our teams, even my last couple of years at Virginia Tech and then it filtered into Chattanooga, last year we were top 15 in the country in three point field goal percentage and top 15 in the country in field goal percentage defense.

You put those two things together, I'm not good at math, but you're going to win a lot of games. We're not going to force a ton of turnovers, pack line style, and really play the field goal percentage game, right, of forcing people to try to beat us to their weakness.

I know there's not a ton of weakness in this league with players, so we have to be ultra-disciplined on that end. That then allows us -- we're not going to be overly big. It's something we talk about every day. We joked around the other day calling ourselves the Tiny Tigers, but we have to be okay with that and have a chip on our shoulder to be able to rebound as a team and then get out and play in transition.

I think we have a really interesting group of people that can play different styles. I think we have the ability to play fast in transition all while having an opportunity to slow the thing down and play in some half court basketball, but it's not going to be one where one person is dribbling over and over and over again and one is getting all the touches.

I think we're going to beat you by committee and have an opportunity for -- be a lot of balanced scoring, but led by these two next to me having an opportunity for Loyal to push in transition, and like Tess said, she's playing inside and out. I think if we move our kids around and play multiple positions.

THE MODERATOR: Tessa, you go first. Give me a

teammate that you don't think people may not know much about right now, but as soon as the season starts, look out.

TESSA MILLER: I think you could say that with a lot of us, honestly. I think that Hannah Kohn is a great person to watch out for. Obviously she had a good three-point percentage to people know her name, but I think she's going to bring a lot to us this year, and I think she's going to be an amazing shooter for us, and people need to watch out for her.

LOYAL McQUEEN: I'm going to go with Mia Moore. I don't think she played as much. She played at UAB last year. Super athletic, great rebounder, great scorer. Probably pushing transition. So watch out for Mia.

THE MODERATOR: Shawn, Loyal, Tessa, Tiny Tigers here, look out, ACC.

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