

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Florida State Seminoles

Coach Brooke Wyckoff

Ta'Niya Latson

Makayla Timpson

O'Mariah Gordon

Women's Press Conference



BROOKE WYCKOFF: It doesn't really change how we approach anything. Obviously travel out to the West Coast, we are going out to California, which we're super excited about.

You have to think through that kind of thing and what that all entails, but it's mostly excitement and just an opportunity to play some really, really great programs, as always in the ACC with the addition of these three new ones.

THE MODERATOR: Right now -- and it's October -- give me the strengths of this ball club. We've experienced the experience, but give me the strengths and those areas that you know right now for you to make that deep run in March this team needs to get better at.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Well, going into the season we knew we had to get better on the defensive end. So that's one of the things that we have worked on relentlessly, right, ladies, each and every day this preseason?

They have bought into. We changed our defensive style and system to really match what we do on the offensive end and to match the personnel and the capabilities that we have, but we have to get better at that end.

So not only just change the system, but we have to be great in that system.

THE MODERATOR: So this is a coaching question because I think for the common fan, they don't understand. They think pace, and they think pressing, but that's not always it. Especially I think a lot of times for teams who play fast offensively there is a drop-off on the defensive end. How have you tried to balance that?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It's been a journey to really figure out and to look around in the basketball world to look at other teams who play like us offensively because that has been the strength of our identity, it's how fast we play. Really what we have found and what we're going to do this year is to increase our intensity on the defensive end.

That doesn't mean we're going to be a full court press team

THE MODERATOR: Happy to have the Florida State Seminoles on the stage with me today. Head Coach Brooke Wyckoff, Ta'Niya Latson, O'Mariah Gordon, and Makayla Timpson. Welcome, ladies.

Brooke, another NCAA Tournament berth last year. You have some core pieces back. So can you give us kind of a synopsis of where this team is at right now and what the expectations are for the season?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Our expectations for ourselves are very, very high. As you said, we have an experienced core back. We have eight returning players that were impact players last year, and we added four new pieces who are also experienced players.

So for us we're going for it all, and we're working that way and practicing each and every day and have changed some things to make sure year pushing ourselves forward and ready to go deep in the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: One thing about your team is the pace that you play with. Should we expect the same, even faster because there's experience, or...

BROOKE WYCKOFF: What do you guys think?

O'MARIAH GORDON: Faster.

THE MODERATOR: Look out ACC. Right now you have three new additions to the league. You are playing everybody only once. Does that change anything that you do as a head coach in preparation knowing you're not going to have a second, you know, bout with these teams maybe until the ACC tournament?



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40 minutes end line to end line, but it does mean that we are going to just, in the same way on the offensive end, be in attack mode, increase the pace. We're going to try to do that on the defensive end as well.

Q. You brought back a lot of production, as has been stated. How does that help on the defensive side of things, especially when you've got strong people in the back court, like Makayla Timpson here?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It's huge. We have no freshmen, and we have experienced college players. First of all, the people that have been here, our core, they understand our need to be better defensively. They lived it, and they're committed.

But having a team that has played college basketball, that has the physicality, they're ready physically and understand what it takes at this level to do so is what we really are looking for in the offseason in recruiting and what we've been hammering home in our preparation.

THE MODERATOR: Ta'niya, freshmen year a lot of people said, She snuck up on people. People weren't quite ready. Last year everybody knew. Taking now what you learned in that sophomore year, what were those areas that, Hey, I need to be better? I'm an upper classman now. I need to be better at this my junior year.

TA'NIYA LATSON: Definitely my leadership. I have taken pride in that each and every day in practice. Just instilling confidence in some of my teammates and also being experienced and knowing the system, helping them out, especially the newcomers, is important.

THE MODERATOR: O'Mariah, one thing that's definitely about this team is as much pace as you play with, you don't turn the ball over much, and you're a guard. Tell me, what is that about that you guys have whether it's skill, moxie, basketball IQ, that helps you play that way.

O'MARIAH GORDON: I think honestly just my teammates, mainly Ta'niya. We kind of go off of each other like playing the one and playing the four and things like that. I think she kind of helps me stay, like, cool-headed.

I have to be decisive. Coach Brooke always tells me I have to be decisive, be decisive. I think being decisive in our system and not kind of getting hot-headed when I have the ball kind of helps me do that.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, Makayla, you are one of the more undersized posts in the league. However, you have the school record for double-doubles. You are a beast on the glass. In the games I've done you have owned the

paint. What is it that allows -- I mean, again, this is for future generation of undersized posts. What's the advice you would give them on being as excellent as you have been?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say just believing in yourself. Like my coaches and my teammates, especially these people up here, I mean, they just believe in me so much, and I have to believe in myself just as much as they believe in me.

That's how I've been getting through my season. That's why I've been dominating in post.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to ask you two to talk about Makayla now. You know she's undersized most nights. What are you saying to her, and what are you seeing from her night in and night out?

TA'NIYA LATSON: Just to be a dog. Be the person that she is, the player that she is. She's obviously dominant in her position no matter the size.

I mean, she can compete with the best in the post, and she's versatile. She can shoot. She can go out there on the perimeter and make stuff happen. Yeah, I just try to instill confidence in her and just let her know she's the best on the floor regardless of her size.

THE MODERATOR: O'Mariah, we talked about three new additions to the ACC. What would you say to them is Florida State basketball?

O'MARIAH GORDON: I would say Florida State basketball, we're coming. I know that we haven't done what we wanted to do in the past years, but we're coming. Like you said, we have the same core, and we're ready.

THE MODERATOR: So knowing the new revamped ACC, for most people it's known as the best women's basketball conference in the country. How have you and your staff approached preparing for three new teams, if you have at all right now?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah. Well, it is. You understand that you are going to be seeing a lot of just different styles every single night. You're not repeating. We repeat once with Miami. We have a home and away with them. Very familiar.

Just understanding that each new game is a brand new opportunity, and we can't rest on past history. There's a lot of new coaches. There will be a lot of new systems even with familiar names in the ACC.

Honestly we're excited. It's so fun as a coach to dig in and to do an opponent scout and to understand who that team is and how we're going to approach it and attack it. So, yeah, I have always believed the ACC is the best women's basketball conference, and adding these three programs just reaffirms that belief.

THE MODERATOR: All right, O'Mariah, you're a veteran now. Give me the scouting report on Latson here, the good and the bad.

O'MARIAH GORDON: The scouting report is there is no scouting report. There's nothing to do about it (laughing).

BROOKE WYCKOFF: That's good.

THE MODERATOR: You are playing one-on-one against her.

TA'NIYA LATSON: Let's not talk about that.

THE MODERATOR: Can you slow her down?

O'MARIAH GORDON: No. I mean, it's hard to slow her down. She plays at her own pace. She's resilient. Like, she wants it on the offensive end, and I think this year she's going to show even more how resilient she is, and it's really going to add to her game.

THE MODERATOR: You've played at the highest level. You've played obviously at your alma mater, but we see now where women's basketball is. What does it mean for you for these young ladies to be in a Florida State uniform and play in this environment that we're in?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I love it. I love having a front row seat to watch these young women be able to take advantage of this moment. For me obviously it's personal. I love that name that's across the front of their chest, and I love who each of these are and the name that's on the back of their jerseys.

So to see that come together in this moment, and they are taking full advantage of it. They are working as hard as they can to get the most out of this moment, and they understand the gravity of it. So it's an exciting time to be a part of women's basketball and especially at Florida State.

THE MODERATOR: One thing that I love about this program, it's not about winning. It's about NCAA tournaments, and it is about making that run. So for each of you, what is the goal this year? You're all veterans now. What's the goal? Let's start with you at the end.

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: For me it's just to get past that first

round. We have all the talent in the world, and this team is just so amazing. Just for us to get past that first round, just go beyond that, is our goal this year.

O'MARIAH GORDON: I would say the same. Going past that first round, but not stopping there. Getting into that Sweet 16, getting to that Elite Eight. Just wanting more for ourselves.

TA'NIYA LATSON: Definitely that's our goal this year. We're thinking about it's going to be game-by-game, but we're also thinking about the futures and what we know what we want, especially for this program and for Coach Brooke too.

THE MODERATOR: I brought this up earlier. The ACC is unique in that there are four sitting head coaches that are leading their alma maters. I don't think there's anything else like that in the country. What is it about the ACC that allows that and fosters that kind of environment?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It's just got an amazing history. I was talking in the other room earlier, you know, Virginia women's basketball wins the 1992 ACC championship. That's Dawn Staley's team, and just the history of success in women's basketball in the ACC is very, very rich. It's always had the top players in the country. It's always had great coaching.

As it's expanded, it's gotten better. So that's where there's so much pride there. Also, it's just a credit to the institutions, the athletic departments who just like at Florida State, who do such a good job of fostering not just, okay, come here and play and win games, but beyond that, fostering the success of their student-athletes and welcoming them back like they did me.

THE MODERATOR: So your head coach has been the head coach three years. We're not talking interim, but three years. Highly successful. What is it about Coach Wyckoff that makes her so successful in terms of her leadership?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say she just cares about us outside of basketball. That's the main thing that I have been grateful for. It's just so amazing that she cares about me as a person instead of basketball.

You know, head coaches can't get caught up in basketball, basketball, basketball, but she cares about us, our personality and our family. There are so many things that comes with her that I'm grateful for.

O'MARIAH GORDON: Yeah, just her personality, just being so outgoing and caring so much more about us and

just people outside of herself. Despite of everything she's gone through, you could never tell because she never blinked an eye, and she never changed, so...

TA'NIYA LATSON: I would say that's one of the biggest things for me, and she holds us to a high standard. I feel like that helps with our success.

We know what we have to do each and every night. She holds us accountable be. She cares about us as people too.

THE MODERATOR: O'Mariah, last year you had a career high points, assists, minutes -- I'm sorry -- rebounds. I'm sorry. What should we expect from your game now in your senior year? You made a huge jump. Can we expect just as much this coming season?

O'MARIAH GORDON: Yes, ma'am. I think my teammates, especially, especially KK and Ta'niya, they hold me to a high standard. I know I have to give more, and I know I can give more. Also, just growing in that leadership aspect and know I have years under my belt and I have that experience is what's going to help take me to the next level.

THE MODERATOR: Makayla, now as a senior if you could give your younger self some advice, what would it have been?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say just take it day by day. When I was a freshman, like, I mean, I was just so caught up in the moment. I mean, the moment was fast for me. Each and every day was fast.

Now it has started to slow down, and I am just so mature with basketball and knowing that I have a lot of years under my belt and now the game goes smooth for me. But just to be a big dog for my teammates and just showcase my leadership and also my talent.

THE MODERATOR: Ta'niya, when I use the term in terms of accomplish greatness, for you personally what does that mean?

TA'NIYA LATSON: Just to be myself. I know what I want to put out there to the world, and I know that consistency is important to me. So being consistent in what I do and also having that, like, grower's mindset. I want to grow. Even though I've accomplished a lot, but I want to also take it to another level.

THE MODERATOR: For each one of you, give me one word that you want to summarize your upcoming season.

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: Unforgettable.

O'MARIAH GORDON: I would say grit.

TA'NIYA LATSON: Exciting.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Legacy.

THE MODERATOR: Sorry, ladies. The coach just mic-dropped on you.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: That's for them. Leave a legacy. That's what I want.

THE MODERATOR: Florida State Seminoles. Ladies, good luck and thank you for sharing your time with us today.

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