

# University of Georgia Women's Basketball Media Conference

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## Katie Abrahamson-Henderson Jere Morehead Josh Brooks

Men's Basketball Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the stage as we welcome to Athens, our head coach for our women's basketball program, Katie Abrahamson-Henderson. Please welcome as our guest the 22nd president of the University of Georgia, Jere W. Morehead. He currently serves as president of the Southeastern Conference and is chair of the Division I Board of Directors for the NCAA. Please join me in welcoming President Morehead.

JERE MOREHEAD: Good afternoon. Today the Bulldog Nation welcomes our newest women's basketball coach, Coach Abe. Coach Abe is one of our own, a former Lady Bulldog who played for UGA legend Andy Landers. She is a champion, a proven leader whose teams have earned remarkable success during her 17 years as a head coach. Her squads at Central Florida, Albany, and Missouri State secured regular season and conference championships as well as multiple NCAA Tournament bids.

Coach Abe has been named a league Coach of the Year on four separate occasions while guiding seven women to Player of the Year awards in their conferences. She is the right leader at the right time to build upon the great and rich history of Georgia women's basketball at the University of Georgia, and we are delighted to welcome her back.

Coach, we cannot wait to cheer on the Lady Bulldogs with you at the helm and you leading our student-athletes to achieve excellence not only on this court, but in the classroom as well. To you, to Michael, to Savannah and Brooklyn, welcome home to the University of Georgia and Go Dogs.

(Applause).



And now I'd like to introduce our athletic director Josh Brooks.

JOSH BROOKS: Thank you. Thank you all for being here today. I cannot thank you all enough. It's so great to see you all here. We have a phenomenal fan base. I've said it before, I'll say it again, it's a great day to be a dog.

First of all, I want to thank President Morehead, Darrice Griffin, Stephanie Ransom, everyone on my exec team. This truly was a team effort coming together to lead this search, and I cannot thank them enough for their support throughout this process.

(Applause).

I am so excited to introduce you to Coach Abe today. President Morehead already mentioned some of her accomplishments, I'm going to give you a few more.

We could spend all day here telling you about her 17 years as head coach. In her career of 17 years, her teams won 16 conference championships. That's right, 16 championships in 17 years. Think about that. Of those 17 years, her teams made the postseason 14 times, and we all know one of those years was cancelled due to COVID. Out of 16 attempts, they were in the postseason 14 times. Her teams averaged 22 victories a season with a 70 percent winning percentage over that time.

(Applause).

Again, we could go on and on about her resume, but let me tell you about some of the things that you won't hear on a resume. She's a proven leader. She's someone who cares about her student-athletes. She believes in the empowerment of young women and developing the generation's next leaders. She's going to care about our student-athletes on the court, in the classroom, in the community. She's fiercely loyal to her family, her staff, her coaches, her student-athletes, and the community.

We all know that she played here for two years before transferring, and we're just glad that we finally have Coach



Abe back home.

(Applause).

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Hello, everybody. Go Dogs!

I have a piece of paper here I'm going to read because I don't want to forget anything, and I'll obviously answer some questions. I'm super excited to be here. I'm honored to be named the next women's head basketball coach at the University of Georgia. I'm looking forward to this journey, and I cannot wait to start building long life relationships along the way.

I see the team right there. Hi team. I talked to them last night. So they kind of know my personality a little bit.

I need to say thank yous obviously to a lot of people. Thank you to President Morehead. Thank you to Josh Brooks. Thank you to Darrice for the opportunity to coach at one of the best women's basketball programs -- one of the best women's basketball programs in the country.

(Applause).

I also have to thank UCF and some of the people there. I want to thank the former players at UCF for all the record breaking seasons we had. We had six of them. Awesome, awesome young women. They will always be family to me, and you'll meet some of them because they'll definitely come visit us and come see us.

Obviously, I want to thank the UCF administration, President Cartwright and Terry Mohajir for all their support and belief in the system to help put UCF women's basketball on the national map.

To my family, my husband Michael is right here. This is my husband Michael. Go ahead, clap it up for him.

(Applause).

Listen, if you don't have a spouse in this business who gets this, it can be very difficult. I'm blessed to have him. He loves women's basketball. He's in women's basketball. He referees women's basketball. He refereed in the WNBA. So he loves women's sports. So I'm very blessed to have him as my rock.

Obviously, I have two daughters, Brooklyn and Savannah. To my staff that was formerly at UCF with me, I have a couple of them here. Tahnee Balerio, I'm going to have her stand up. She's not going to want to stand up. Isoken Uzamere, Ebone Henry, and also who coached with me at

UCF was Nykesha Sales and Stephanie Follett. It takes every single one of us to make our dreams a reality, and I appreciate you for trusting and believing in me as your leader.

Being back here where I started my college career, it's a dream. It's crazy. I see pictures of me, and I'm like please take those down. My hair, what was I thinking back then? To be able to come back and lead this historic program is very exhilarating to me. My staff and I have rebuilt two programs. Taking them to the bottom, all the way from the bottom, eight games, seven games, all the way to the top, winning conference championships and going to the NCAA Tournament every single year. So that's a huge accomplishment for me and my staff.

Georgia women's basketball, on the other hand, is a winning program already. It's a winning program already. So I can only imagine where we could go from here.

One thing you'll hear me say all the time is enjoy the journey. One step at a time, one day at a time, because it can get overwhelming to think about how many games we have to play. So I'm always telling our team one game at a time. One day at a time. Let's enjoy it every single day that we go through it.

I believe in winning. I believe in winning on the court. I believe in winning in the classroom, and I believe in winning in life. The number one reason -- and I'm going to repeat it. The number one reason I coach is to empower young women, period.

So I'm going to have the team stand up. I told them last night they have to stand up. Here we go, stand up. I want you to give them, everybody here in this room, a big round of applause.

(Applause).

Listen, we all love Georgia basketball, and we all love being Georgia Bulldogs, but no matter what, these are the young women that do it every day. These are the young women that go to work every day. These are the young women that have to go to classes every day. These are the young women that have to get good grades. They're the ones that do it. If we don't have them and they don't love this place, nobody up here has jobs. So I'm always going to make sure we empower them. That's going to be the number one goal. That's what my staff's goal all the time is to do, is to empower them and make them great.

You guys want to keep standing or sit? You can sit.

My philosophy, and I know a lot of people say it, is family



first, and that means the university family, that means the athletic department family, that means our women's basketball family. Obviously, that means my family. That's what that means, and we're going to always be that way.

The second is academics. That's always going to come first. After basketball ends, their careers and what they're going to do the next 55 years of their life and not just the next 5 after playing college basketball in the pros or wherever they can play, there's going to be something they have to fall back on, and that's definitely going to be academics and their career. So that's going to always be important to my staff and I.

Obviously the last thing is basketball -- you can clap for academics. Go for it.

(Applause).

So family, academics means FAB, fabulous. They're going to be fabulous. We really stand by that all the time. Our teams will always have energy -- they heard this last night because they asked my coaches what is it I really want to see? Always have energy. They're always going to play hard, and they're definitely going to be great teammates. You're going to see them all the time high fiving each other.

You're going to see them all the time cheering for each other. They're definitely going to be great teammates. Those have always been the way we coached, and that's, to be honest, how we've been really successful.

Basketball-wise, because I know you all want to hear about basketball, our style of play is always going to be up tempo. We're going to play fast and aggressive. That's a key, that word, aggressive. We will recruit those type of versatile players offensively. We're going to play inside and out. We're not just going to play outside. We're going to play both. So everybody's going to have a role on our team, and they're going to do it really, really well.

We're going to defend for 40 minutes at an intense level because, in my experience, and all the championship teams I've played, the common theme is lockdown defense. I know everybody wants to see pretty three-point shots, but the teams that are playing in the NCAA Tournament and the teams that are playing in the Final Four, they have lockdown defense. So that's what we're going to do because we want to be a championship team.

When I played here for Coach Landers -- I'm going to say Coach Landers because I feel like I shouldn't say Andy Landers, but when I played here for Coach Landers, our teams were tough, they were aggressive, and they were physical. That will continue.

Our players and coaches will know, when they wear that Georgia logo on the front of their chest, there's honor behind that name because the foundation was set by some of the best basketball players in the world, not in the country, the world. And Andy Landers obviously was one of the best coaches in the country and the world, I mean, in my opinion. He's one of the best coaches that ever coached the game.

I will leave this program with so much pride for a name. My staff and I, we cannot wait to get started. When I played here, this place was rockin'. I feel the same excitement here today. All I need you all to do is come back next year and cheer us on, empower these young women to play really hard. That's what we're looking for. Go Dogs!

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we're going to now begin the media portion of today's program.

**Q. Coach, obviously, coming to Georgia, a huge step in your career, but you already have some assistant coaches here with you, and it speaks to the continuity of the staff that you had at Central Florida and that you brought here. How important was that to kind of bring the people who you knew with you to carry on those values that you guys pride yourself on over these last couple years at your last stop?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yeah, great question. Thank you. We're still in the process of what we're doing and who I'm going to hire, but it's always going to be about we and not about me. It's never going to be that way. It's going to be about we too the players, it's always going to be about that.

I've just been very blessed to have coaches that played for me, that enjoyed playing for me, that wanted to get into coaching, and I've been blessed to have the ability to hire some people that have been with me, I mean, for 12 years, 15 years, everything.

So I think the continuity for all my teams that I've coached, that was really big because these coaches, they really know me. They know my philosophy. They know everything about me. That's super big. Really you answered your own question, the continuity and the consistency, I think, is really, really big.

**Q. When did leaving UCF kind of become something that you're kind of looking at? Was it when the Georgia job opened? When did leaving the UCF job kind of get on your forefront?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Sorry, I can't -- it's such an echo. I didn't really hear.

**Q. Was leaving UCF something that you were kind of thinking about, or was it the perfect job of coming to Georgia, coming home? When did that kind of start going on in your mind?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: When did I? I told the team last night. They played on Friday night. We played Florida. Then I didn't know anything about this opportunity. Then I think they played on Sunday, we played on Monday. Then we flew home -- we played at 9:00 at UConn. We flew home. We got home super late from the game. Then we flew home on Tuesday morning. We're all exhilarated, excited, tired, the whole works.

Then I think Wednesday morning that's when Coach Taylor decided to take the other job, and that's kind of when I heard about it. So it was really fast. Everything's been fast and furious and crazy and exciting and all the works. That's pretty much when I heard about it.

**Q. You transferred from Georgia, if I understand your career correctly. Obviously the transfer portal is a big deal these days. Why did you leave Georgia, and what's your attitude towards the transfer portal now as you take this program up?**

KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Look, see? This is what they do. Back then obviously -- I'm originally from Iowa -- somebody clapped. Yes, Iowa, woo! So back then, obviously, I was 18, 19 years old. At the time I was a decent basketball player, and I was recruited. I love Coach Landers. I came down here, and I was just home sick. That was a lot.

After games, I'd be done playing games, and I was really close to my family. As you see, I'm a family person. In hindsight, it was probably the best thing I really did in terms of coaching because then I got to go home and play for C. Vivian Stringer. Did I know I was going to be a coach? Absolutely not. That's not what I wanted to do. I just wanted to empower women.

Looking back on my career, my basketball career and my coaching career, I've been very blessed to play for two Hall of Fame coaches, work for several different Hall of Fame coaches. So I think that was God's plan for me to just be able to learn a lot from some really, really good coaches.

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