

University of Florida Basketball Media Conference

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Gainesville, Florida, USA

Head Coach Todd Golden

Press Conference



SCOTT STRICKLIN: Thank you, Denver. I want to thank everyone for being here on this special day where we get a chance to welcome Todd and Megan and Jacob and Madison into the Gator family.

Before I begin with my remarks about Todd, I want to thank some people at the UAA and beyond that were a part of this process and really helped us land where we are today.

I had three people who joined me during interviews as we talked to various candidates. Lynda Tealer, who is our executive associate athletic director and our men's basketball sport administrator. She serves on the Division I Council and just is a general superstar. Lynda, great work, and thank you.

Chip Howard, another associate athletic director who has been around this place for over three decades and knows UAA so incredibly well and provides a lot of insight, and Duke Werner, associate athletic director for sports medicine and has been embedded in the men's basketball program for several years. Duke was an unbelievable resource as well. Really appreciate that.

Had so many other people who contributed. Denver Parler, Ryan Dunn, Jay Jacobs, Steve McClain. You know, people we reached out to who were a great resource. Coach Billy Donovan, whose dad, Mr. Bill, is here. Thank you, Mr. Donovan, for being here today. Great to see you.

From the SEC office Dan Leibovitz, the men's basketball contact there. Mike Tranghese, former Commissioner of the Big East, who is a consultant with the SEC, was also a great resource. Appreciate all those people and so many more who helped with this process.

The University Athletic Association aspires to provide a championship experience with integrity in all that we do. Doing things the right way is imperative, and at Florida it's been demonstrated you can do that while achieving at a high, high level. The Gator men's basketball program has exemplified this approach.

Since 1989 the Gators have won seven SEC Championships and have appeared in 21 NCAA tournaments, nine Elite 8s, five Final Fours, and of course, we've won two National Championships.

Athletic directors never look forward to conducting a coaching search, but the reality is you always need to be prepared. Once Mike, Coach White, shared with me his decision a week ago this past Sunday, I immediately met with our players and then our search process hit high gear.

I would also like to thank Mike and his family, Kira and their kids, for all the efforts they put in here in Gainesville the last seven years. As you all know, Mike is a class guy, and we certainly wish he and his family the very best.

Back to our search, we spoke to an overwhelming number of people in and around the sport of basketball. In those conversations, whether it was someone in the NBA or someone in college basketball, Todd's name kept coming up. As we started looking at metrics and rankings and net and all that stuff, Todd's teams kept showing up. So early on Todd was someone that we developed a high level of interest in talking to.

There's four things that we value in a head coach: Strong character and integrity, that's a given; the ability to bring highly talented people together, whether that's players or coaches or staff; the ability to develop a strong culture and lead that group of people; and the ability to put that team in a position to have a strategic advantage and be successful. Todd checked all these boxes and so many more.

He was a former college walk-on, played for a highly respected coach at Saint Mary's and ended up starting on two NCAA tournament teams. After a brief professional career overseas, he came back to work in America in a corporate sales job before returning to coaching.

He has coached at a variety of conferences, really varied, from the SEC to the Ivy League, of course, the West Coast Conference where he has been at the University of San Francisco the last three years as their head coach and, of course, led the Dons to their first NCAA Tournament appearance in a quarter century.



As everyone is aware, there were no shortage of job openings at high major schools during this recent coaching cycle, including several in the SEC. One thing I would like to share with Gator Nation, all the fans listening out there, because I think it's important, Todd wanted to be a Florida Gator. This was a place that he valued as much as we valued him. He shares our goals and our aspirations to win championships at the University of Florida.

Todd has so many outstanding qualities that make him an ideal person for this position. He is a forward-thinking guy with a detailed analytical plan for all areas of his program. He is bright, engaging, has a magnetic personality that connects with players, recruits, and fans alike. He displays an incredible drive and work ethic that we've had a chance to see firsthand here in the last 48 hours or so. And most importantly, as I said earlier, about what's important for us, he is a man of high character and integrity.

To put it simply, because of his passion, intellect, and innovation, Todd Golden already is where the sport of college basketball is heading. For the Gators that future is now. If you would, help me welcome the Head Basketball Coach of the University of Florida, Todd Golden.

(Applause)

TODD GOLDEN: Thank you, Scott. Before I get started, it is really important for me, I want to thank Father Paul Fitzgerald and Charlie Cross and my former athletic director, Joan McDermott, from the University of San Francisco. We just finished six years there, three as the head coach, and for Megan and I it was the best six years of our life. We had an opportunity to raise our family there. Jake and Madi joined our family there. I'll never forget the relationships that we made and, more importantly, the history that we made on the court by getting back, as Scott mentioned, to the NCAA Tournament for the first time in 25 years. I'm grateful for the time there, and we'll never forget it.

Now, as we begin the next chapter of our lives, it's really important to me to thank Dr. Fuchs, obviously, Scott and his team of Lynda, Chip, and Duke, who allowed me the opportunity to join you guys here today. I really appreciate you guys for your belief in me, and I will not let you down.

The University of Florida and the City of Gainesville are both incredibly special places. I have made a concerted effort over my first few days on the job to reach out and connect with former coaches and former players who have been a part of this storied program.

To a man, they've all shared the same message. This

amazing place has allowed them different life experiences that would not be possible without the time that they've spent on this campus. There's a level of pride that these individuals have and that this university has that's unique and inspiring. It's a powerful reminder of just how special this university is and that the city is.

As we all know, this program, the University of Florida men's basketball program, has a championship pedigree. If you think about it over the last 32 years, it has only had three coaches. Coach Kruger, Coach Donovan, and Coach White have all done a great job of leading this program with great student athletes and a lot of success on the court.

Since 2000, University of Florida Gators men's basketball players have made over \$1 billion in the NBA. We have everything we need here to compete at the championship level. I've spent time in the iconic O-dome last night, was blown away to see the renovations inside the Exactech Arena that were in 2016, basically the year after I left Auburn. We have the \$25 million Hawkins Center that was opened in 2016 as well that helps student athletes from are a development and personal standpoint.

Academically the University of Florida is a top five public institution in the country. Over 415,000 alums and incredibly strong student support from the Rowdy Reptiles. We're a Jordan Brand School. It's just amazing. It's amazing. I can go on and on and on. President Fuchs and Scott, your team has done an incredible job of insuring that this program has everything that it needs to compete at a championship level.

I know some people are a little unfamiliar with me and my background, so I wanted to share a little bit about myself. As Scott mentioned I have a beautiful wife, Megan, who has given me the opportunity to be a really successful coach for everything that she does for our family. Two beautiful kids that she gave us in Jake and Maddie. My parents, Scott and Gail Golden, are here and Megan's parents, Mick and Joanna York. They're the foundation of everything that we do and give me the confidence to go out and work hard and be the coach that I am. If it weren't for you guys, we wouldn't be here today, and I'm very grateful for you for that.

As for my journey in basketball, as both a player and as a coach, it started in high school for me. I was incredibly fortunate to play in Phoenix, Arizona, at Sunnyslope High School for Dan Mannix, who is now in the Arizona State High School Hall of Fame. He has won over 600 games. We won a state championship there, and he is retired now.

He taught me a lot about toughness, desire, determination,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

and really just formed my love of the game. Then that led me to my time at Saint Mary's College being able to play for Randy Bennett and Kyle Smith. I learned a lot about physical and mental toughness there and really cut my teeth. They helped form me into the man I am today.

At one point in my career at Saint Mary's I was fortunate enough to play for a staff that ended up having five Division I head coaches. I've always been surrounded by really, really good coaches, good leadership, guys that understand what it takes to win.

During my coaching career, I've had similarly unique experiences getting to work with for Kyle at Columbia to start. Obviously, coming down here to the South and spending two years with Bruce as we were on the ground floor getting that program up and running. Both guys are on incredibly different sides of the spectrum in terms of who they are and the way they coach, but they're both incredibly unique in their own right. I learned from Kyle structure, organization, and attention to detail. From Bruce I learned about passion, how to build a program, servant leadership and just overall excitement in how to galvanize a group for the greater good.

What I try to do as a coach is take the best qualities of Kyle, take the best qualities of Bruce and the best qualities of myself, put them in a pot and stir it up, and I feel if I can continue to do that over my career, I'll continue to have a lot of success as a coach.

A lot of people have asked me what type of teams should they expect to see when the Gators take the floor next year? I try to explain it, you should expect to see a big, strong deep roster that has a lot of skilled and unselfish players that are willing to put the team in front of themselves. Foundationally, we always strive to be elite in three years: Defensively, rebounding, and taking care of the basketball. If we're able to do that, it will raise our floor and give us a great chance to be really successful and eliminate any unnecessary volatility we might have.

Offensively we're going to play fast, but not in a hurry. We're going to try to push in transition, score early in the clock, hunt rim twos, catch and shoot threes. If we don't score in transition, we're going to slow it down and make you guard us in the half court and make you guard continuous player and ball movement, unique ball screen actions, and different things that I think are incredibly difficult to scout.

Then when people ask, what are you going to see on the defensive side of the ball, really we're going to try to keep teams from doing those things. We're going to try to keep them out of transition, make them run offense in the half

court, make them take tough twos overhand and have an incredibly gritty style to us defensively where teams won't want to face us.

When you see the type of personnel that we have, you're going to realize that we're going to lean in a lot on skill. Very rarely will we have any less than four guys on the court that can dribble, pass, and shoot at an insanely high level. Moving forward this program -- I talked to the student athletes about this when we got here on Monday night. This program is going to be rooted in three core values.

Number one, we're going to have the team first. Every decision that me, my staff, and our student athletes make is going to be for the greater good of the program and the team. Unselfishness is key to me.

Secondly, and this one is pretty simple, but I expect our guys to be prepared and work hard. That's just not from a basketball standpoint or a weightlifting standpoint, that's from an academic standpoint. That's from going out into the community and being with people. I expect us to be prepared and always ready for the challenge.

Lastly, I expect my student athletes as well as my staff to have an attitude of appreciation. This is one of the best programs in the country. This is one of the best institutions in the country. We have everything we need here, and I won't take anything less than guys being super grateful for being a part of it.

Off the court I'm committed to rebuilding the foundation of this program from the ground up, going out in the community, building relationships with the necessary folks, the donors, the alums, the people in the City of Gainesville, and just getting the excitement back in the program.

I can't wait to see the passion of the Rowdies at the games. We'll have a lot of pride wearing the orange and blue, and I can say from the bottom of my heart that I'm incredibly proud to be a Gator. Thank you.

(Applause)

Q. Todd, you touched on the identity of what a Todd Golden team is. How do you go about recruiting to that? What's your philosophy there?

TODD GOLDEN: You recruit to what you want to coach. We're going to look for really smart, motivated student athletes. Obviously, high, high level basketball players, guys that have great attitudes, great work ethics. Most importantly, that really want to be at the University of Florida.

I can't speak to that enough. Obviously, I want guys to come and play for me and my staff, but I want them to be passionate about being here, about making this place great, and so we're going to go out on the trail and tirelessly look for guys that fit that mold. We're going to try to recruit the best. We're going to go for the best players in the country. We're going to try to build a fence around the State of Florida and make sure that we're involved with every great student athlete within this footprint, and then we'll go regionally. We'll look internationally. We'll look in the portal. We'll do everything we need to do. The main key is to recruit highly motivated student athletes that are great basketball players that are passionate and prideful for being here at the University of Florida.

Q. With the international component that's intriguing with you. You have mined that pretty well. Can you just discuss kind of how you go about that and some of the ties you have around the world, I guess?

TODD GOLDEN: It's something that at the University of San Francisco was a really, really good piece for us, and we were able to build relationships all through Europe, Australia, and there's a lot of talented kids over there, and transparently, not a lot of them have come to the SEC yet. You see them in different leagues across the country. Some on the West Coast. I think it's an area that we can go and attack and bring some really talented kids over here.

Q. Todd, at San Francisco you used a lot of international players, as you just mentioned. Does that influence come from Randy Bennett, who always seems to have a roster that's about eight of them from Australia and New Zealand?

TODD GOLDEN: Randy was pretty picky about only going over to Australia. I try to go and spend more time in Europe and find my way over there. Yeah, just my time as a player, I played with a ton of international kids. Obviously, playing overseas over there, building a lot of great relationships. Even at Columbia we had international guys.

Over the past 20 years I feel pretty fortunate to have been able to build a lot of relationships and one of the most important guys in regards to evaluating some of the young student athletes is University of Florida alum, Jonathan Givony, one of the NBA guys that does all the draft stuff for ESPN. There's a lot of great ties that we have here that's going to be an area that we can draw to.

Q. Would you discuss how you got so involved in analytics? It's been well written that you are very

heavily regarded, and would you talk about how you got involved in it and how that has evolved?

TODD GOLDEN: Sure. It started when I was a young kid. My father was passionate about sports. Always had the sports page at the kitchen table eating breakfast every day, and so I would go through and look at box scores and fell in love with looking at numbers and kind of followed that throughout high school.

Really it was at Saint Mary's, and Randy and Kyle back in 2003-2004 were on the cutting edge of analytics all the way back then in regards to collecting data in a different way to evaluate guys. One of the things they did was create a system called Hustle Stats where we statted every possession of five on five in practice, and there was about 40 stats that they would keep, tracking winning plays and losing plays, using it as a teaching tool for our team and pairing it with film.

To be honest, if it weren't for that foundation and that system at Saint Mary's, I wouldn't be here today. I wouldn't have played as much as I did. It gave me an opportunity to break in the rotation as a walk-on. I saw what it did for me and the opportunities that it provided me, and thought that it would be silly if I didn't take advantage of that as a coach.

Q. To follow up on that, I read somewhere when you were playing at Saint Mary's you would add up plus-minuses in your head. How did that work?

TODD GOLDEN: Kyle Smith, who I have worked for a couple of times and played for, he was the associate head coach at Saint Mary's at the time. By my fifth year there I had memorized all the stats that they kept in practice, and there was 40 of them. It wasn't just like shooting stats. It was penetrating and pitching the ball. It was missed rotations. It was blow by middle defensively, et cetera.

I was getting a little cocky in my older age and having more success. I had an NBA point guard standing next to me in Patty Mills. There would be times in practice where I would call out the different numbers and plays and what was going on, and Kyle would get a little frustrated with me, but it was a way of me explaining to him how much I appreciated what we were doing and to the other guys that were younger than I was how important it was to our success.

Q. Also, follow-up, when you were in corporate sales, where did you work? What did you sell? Did you learn anything about coaching?

TODD GOLDEN: My first job after playing professionally was at IMG College working in the college sports

marketing arm. I was selling advertising for the West Coast Conference, really around their West Coast Conference Championship that had just been moved to Vegas. I worked with the people above me on deals with Zappos.com, Las Vegas with signage, and digital assets and all those things. That was kind of my first part in the business world.

Then I moved over to Comcast Sportsnet, and we had all the digital and TV rights for the Giants, Oakland Athletics, Niners, Golden State Warriors. We would sell advertising into those games and to their pre and postgame programming and everything like that.

Scott and I, we joked about it a lot, in the process talked about those times. I had fun. I was making a good amount of money, but I realized really quick after moving over to Comcast I didn't want to come to work in a suit and tie every day selling advertising. It gave me kind of the jolt I needed to get back into basketball and into coaching.

Q. You mentioned your experience with Bruce Pearl. Specifically being in the SEC, what was it like just coaching and recruiting in this league, and what can you take from that experience?

TODD GOLDEN: It was a great learning experience. I came to Auburn from Columbia, and so we were working with -- it was a low major program with incredibly intelligent student athletes. Not a lot of resources. Trying to navigate through different situations in the best way possible, and then move down with Bruce to Auburn. It was a completely different ball game. It was going from a low major situation to a high major, what I consider nearly professional athletics in regards to the way that it's supported, the resources, and it took me a little bit to figure it out and to get comfortable, but by my second year down there with him I felt great about going out on the road and pitching SEC, pitching Auburn at that time, what we had going on and what we were going to grow to.

Really those two years made me very comfortable in the process with Scott, Lynda, and Chip and Duke of talking about what we could do here and different things we could take from the first couple of years building that program up and what we could transition here and build in a similar way. It was a great experience that made me a more complete coach.

Q. Then I heard you had a chance to talk with Billy Donovan. What was it like just getting to speak to him?

TODD GOLDEN: Talk to who?

Q. Billy Donovan. What was it like getting a chance to have a conversation with a coach like that, first of all, and what kind of advice did he have for you about this job?

TODD GOLDEN: It's funny how things come full circle because Coach Donovan's two championships were during my time as a player at Saint Mary's, so, obviously, I was following those games and those teams very closely. Incredible job by him, first of all, to get that team back for the second year, get these guys to, again, similar to what we were talking about, putting the team first. Those guys turned down a lot of money to come back and do it together again here at Florida.

I was able to talk to Coach Donovan last Saturday for about 30 minutes, and it gave me goose bumps the whole time we were chatting because he was so unselfish, so willing to be a resource to me. He said he was willing to help as much or as little as possible. Talked about how passionate him and his family were about Gainesville and how big of a part that this place played in his life, his family's life, the maturation of his kids.

He considers this place home, and it's really important to him that this place is great, and he said you don't have to worry about me. I said, Coach, "I'm going to be calling you a lot. Don't worry." I want to pick his brain. I want him to be a big resource for me. He is a guy I look up to both from a coaching standpoint and also as a man. Everything I hear from others is how great of a person he is.

I got a chance to meet him a couple of years ago when they practiced at our gym in San Francisco, and I'm going to strive to have the same amount of success and to lead in a similar way that Coach Donovan did.

Q. You're growing fast in this industry and coming now to the SEC as a pretty young coach. Do you think you can use that to your advantage of relating to these athletes a little bit more, growing that bond with them a little bit more, and can you talk a little bit about how you hope to do that, hope to gain their trust a little faster because I know that they would love to get back to the NCAA Tournament and kind of falling into that, do you have pressure of making sure or is there pressure on your end that you need to get them back to that next year?

TODD GOLDEN: I'll answer your first couple of questions first.

I think it's an advantage, to be honest, in a couple of respects. Number one, from my ability to build relationships with the student athletes. That was

something that myself and my staff spent a lot of time on at San Francisco, getting in the weeds with these guys, making sure that a relationships weren't transactional. I wanted them to know that we were obviously there for them, and we were going to ask a lot of them on the court, but really you build that trust off the court.

It's spending time with them, eating dinner with them, going to breakfast, getting meals, making sure you know who their girlfriends are, what their social lives are like, what kind of music they like to listen to, and when you build those types of relationships that's when you get guys to play hard for you.

That's when you get them to play at their best. We've been able to do that at San Francisco. I had the opportunity to meet some of these guys on Monday night, and I have no reason to believe we won't be able to do this here.

Coach White was able to recruit really talented, really smart student athletes, guys that were high achievers, and those are the type of guys I'm drawn to. I think we'll have a really transition that way.

Secondly, from a recruiting standpoint, yeah, I think we'll be able to go out and hit the road running, spend a lot of time on the road here initially making sure that we do what we need to do to make sure we have a strong team next year, and, again, I listen to the same music that these guys listen to. I'm listening to Lil Baby and Drake and Wayne, all these guys. We're going to be able to vibe pretty well, and I think we're going to have a really good time together.

Q. The Rowdy Reptiles have a pretty good reputation and bring a lot of energy to games. How do you plan to reach out and connect with the fan base, the students particularly, and energize the program that way?

TODD GOLDEN: We had a good blueprint at San Francisco. Basketball on the West Coast is a little different. There's not as much passion in terms of the fan base. San Francisco is a very artsy city. There's not a lot of kids -- there's no football Saturdays in the WCC, let's put it that way.

We were able to in my first year where we had very minimal students coming to the games to this year after COVID and getting through that piece to be able to go out on campus and really galvanize the students to get them on board and get them supporting to the point where when we played Gonzaga in our last home game of the regular season, we had over 1,300 students there, and that was something that hasn't happened at San Francisco since the early '70s.

Already having the great foundation here with the Rowdies in terms of them -- I remember when we played here in 2015 when we came down with Auburn, one of the things that I'll never forget is going out on the court, getting to warm up the guys about 60 minutes from the game, and basically the student section was already packed. That was unlike any other place in the SEC.

What do we do? Again, we'll go out and get with them. We'll spend time with them. I'll bring them over to the gym before the season starts, kind of explain to them what we're going to be like, our team. We'll get on campus and pass things out. That's a big part of what I plan to do and the great thing is that a lot of that heavy lifting is already done.

Those students are already passionate about supporting their student athletes.

Q. Do you as a coach with, let's say, not vast head coaching experience, do you see value or will you get a veteran assistant? Did you do that in the past? Is that something you see some value in going forward?

TODD GOLDEN: I'm very confident in my abilities to lead a program. I think what I'm going to do is go out and hire the best staff I can, and whether that's somebody that has head coaching experience or not, I'm going to get experienced guys that have been able to be successful in their different programs over the years and we're going to get guys that are really hungry to recruit, guys that are really hungry to get in the weeds with these guys from a player development standpoint and a team standpoint, and most importantly, get guys that are good men and that are great role models for these guys so they can look up to them as more than just coaches. Guys that are leaders, fathers, et cetera.

Q. I didn't mean that as a slight, sorry.

TODD GOLDEN: It's okay.

Q. I had to ask, do you know Bill Russell at all? Have you talked to him?

TODD GOLDEN: It was a strange situation, but he had a little bit of a funky relationship with the university, so not Bill Russell as much, but Bill Cartwright, who had a great career in the NBA, three championships as a player, three championships as a coach. Was my special assistant at San Francisco, and he was a guy that would come to practice nearly every day, and Bill would always give me a similar message that Coach Donovan did. I'll be here to support as much or as little as you need me, and over the

three years in my head coaching there at San Francisco he was nothing but incredibly supportive. He actually sent me a really nice message and said, "Hey, Todd, you've earned this opportunity. Go crush it." He was really happy for Megan and I.

Q. You have talked before about the portal is here to stay. Would you talk about how that has changed recruiting already and how you see it changing in the future, continuing to change things?

TODD GOLDEN: It's just a different element, right? In the past programs have generally been built from a student athlete perspective from the ground up. Recruiting a lot of high school kids and developing and growing through the bottom of the program and get them through to graduation. It's just changed that way.

I think a lot of it is to the benefit of the student athlete, which is good in regards to having a little more freedom and flexibility, the one-time transfer exception, and being able to move a little bit.

With that freedom, with that student athlete welfare piece, the portal is even more important, and I think the recruiting landscape has changed more in the last two years than it had in the previous 20.

I've said that a number of times. It's a very important piece. It's a place where you can go and get more data on guys, guys that have played at the Division I level before and be able to have a better understanding of how they can help you at your program.

We won't be a strictly portal program. It's not something we're going to go and say, oh, we're only going to hunt and find guys here, but it's just going to be a piece of our program building for sure.

Q. When you are recruiting in the portal, what are you looking for specifically?

TODD GOLDEN: Really good players. Yeah. I mean, guys that have achieved at a high level in their previous spot.

There's usually a lot of variables and different things that go into these decisions, whether it was a coach leaving, whether it was just an uncomfortable situation, whatever it is. There's a lot of guys in the portal -- I'll put it this way. In the past transferring has had a negative connotation. People have thought of transferring as something that's negative and speaks to a lack of continuity in the program, things of that nature. I don't look at it that way.

I think these guys are young men. They're allowed to make decisions like this, and so we're going to vet them the same way that we would vet high school kids. We're going to talk to them. We're going to talk to their families. If they're transferring usually former coaches to see this there's a reason.

You can find a lot of special kids student athletes in the portal that can fit within the makeup of your program if you look hard.

Q. First question is on the Bruce Pearl, Coach. I appreciate a lot of things. What are some things you learned under him?

TODD GOLDEN: I knew Bruce quite well before joining him. I played with his son Steven in 2005 at a Maccabiah Games in Australia, and Bruce came out and worked with our team a little bit. Then in 2009 Bruce coached our team in Israel to a gold medal, and it was really there where him and I formed a really strong bond and trust.

Just so happened five years later he got back in and got the job at Auburn, and he reached out and wanted me to come and build a program with him from the ground up. First of all, his work ethic is second to none. Just I remember from the time I got down to Auburn with him he just didn't sleep. We were living in the same little apartment for a couple of months, and I remember every morning at 5:00 he would be getting up, going to the office, and that work ethic was something that I was just so inspired by, and he led the charge.

If he weren't keeping up with him, you felt like you weren't doing your job. That's something that I've always taken with me is that dedication to the craft, that working really hard, and also, the player relationship piece like we've talked about a lot today. He was really good at getting guys to play incredibly hard for him and love and trust. I think that's something that I was able to take with me to San Francisco and really emulate and do a really good job that way as well, and I'm 100% going to do the same thing here at Florida.

Q. Also, Coach, you mentioned about your game plan offensively and defensively, Coach. I'm not sure if you looked over game film from the past season with the Gators, but what are some things you feel like the Gators do on their roster right now that you can translate into next year?

TODD GOLDEN: It's interesting. I'm not going to go into too much depth, but I think the two areas that we're going to really strive to be better at next year is shooting the ball. The team I think was around 30.5% from the year on three,

and the way that I like to play that's simply not going to be good enough. We're going to have to go out and shoot the ball better to achieve the goals we want to achieve.

Also defensively, rebounding. That was an area that was surprising to me when evaluating the team and the roster that they didn't have a lot of success in because I think the pieces are there, and I think the talent is there in terms of being able to get on the glass. I think if we can lift those two areas up a couple of pegs and stay consistent and get better in other areas, we should be back in the tournament next year.

Q. Just a quick follow-up. I want to know how it felt to get verified this morning?

TODD GOLDEN: We went 0 for 1 on my first attempt. I woke up the next morning and said it wasn't good enough, so we had to go back and grind at it.

Social media I understand is a really important piece right now with the student athletes and the kids. It's something that we'll know about, but I really don't care, to be honest.

Q. I'm sure you talked to Scott about this. Was there any trepidation on your part that your predecessor, Mike White, left on his own for a seemingly lesser job? Is there any thought that expectations can be too high at a program?

TODD GOLDEN: Not at all. What Scott said was 100% true. When this opportunity became available, this was where Megan and I wanted to be. Not saying that we thought or knew that we could be here, but just from my time here, loving and following college sports for nearly 30 years, whether it's the orange and blue, whether it was the great success Coach Donovan had, this is just an incredibly special place that I've always held in extremely high regard.

Coach White leaving, it didn't mean anything to me, to be honest, and I don't know what he was going through or what led him to that, but it didn't change the way I felt about this place at all.

Honestly, at a place like this they should have high expectations. Like I mentioned, there's everything you need here to be really, really good, and if they didn't have those championship aspirations and expectations, if Scott didn't want to do that, that would concern me. If he didn't think, hey, Todd, I expect you to compete to win SEC Championships, to do those things, oh, I just want you to be middle of the pack, that would have concerned me. I want those expectations. We're going to do everything we can to get there.

Q. Coach, I've been studying this league and working with the SEC Network and have seen that a few of the select coaches, here looking at Coach Musselman and Coach Bruce Pearl, they're often found with their shirts off whether it's at football games, after big wins. Is that something that we can expect to see in the Golden era?

TODD GOLDEN: I'm keeping my shirt on, man. I'm not big enough to be doing all that. We'll find some different ways to show our enthusiasm and excitement, but B.P. is crazy, man. He is going out with a big T on his chest. Muss should not take his shirt off. We're going to try to keep it a little cleaner than that. (Laughing).

Thank you, guys very much. I appreciate it.

(Applause)

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