

SEC Men's Basketball

Media Day Quotes

Alabama Head Coach Avery Johnson

On the expectation level for Alabama...

"The first year we were picked 13th and last year we were picked seventh, so we understand that there is going to be more responsibility when you get more attention. That's what our players want. They want to be on the big stage. They want to have that type of excitement around our program. I like the additional pressure, because it's on the coach and our staff. Hopefully we will play well."

On preparing for home games...

We lost too many games at home to be a high-level NCAA Tournament team. We have to do a better job of playing at home. We've looked at how we prepared our team at home. We have more support from our student body and season ticket holders. We have to get off to better starts at home."

Arkansas Head Coach Mike Anderson

On Arkansas' style of defense...

I think we are extended more. I think last year we played more half court than we had in the previous year offensively and defensively because we had seven new guys to come on board. Now those guys know more about what we do, and we'll do it more by committee. It's not all about blocking shots. Defensively, we really have to dig in and make people uncomfortable."

On the Arkansas team...

"My biggest aim right now is that if you are going to make it to that next level, then your defense has to be on par. We are going to be more athletic this year. I really like this team right now."

Auburn Head Coach Bruce Pearl

On the strength of the SEC...

"It was probably a year ahead of what might have been forecasted. I think everybody realized this could be a great year for the league. What (South Carolina) did last year, finishing in the middle of our league and getting in and getting all the way to the Final Four, I think it showed the rest of the country the quality of the basketball in our league. Now you have a situation with 14 teams in the league. I really believe there are 12 or 13 teams that think they have a chance to make postseason, which I believe could put us in a situation where half our league is going to get in."



On earning a bid to the NCAA Tournament...

"I have made the tournament a lot. Every time they called that school's name – whether it was Southern Indians, Wisconsin-Milwaukee or Tennessee and they have not called Auburn's name yet – and I've been there three years - it is an emotional, impactful time, and it never gets old. Then you try to take your team on a magic carpet ride. The more you advance the more you feel like this is supposed to happen. What it does for a program, it adds to the credibility. We're really good at a lot of things at Auburn. We just haven't been good at basketball with any consistency. We are making progress and we feel like we have a team that has a chance to get its name called at the end."

Florida Head Coach Mike White

On being picked second in the SEC...

"I'm not sure I would have picked us second to be honest. We lost a lot. I think our league is as good as it's been since I've been a part of the SEC; I don't think the SEC has been from top to bottom any stronger than it is right now. It's a pretty lofty expectation there, but I'm more concerned with internal expectations."

On sustaining success...

"The challenge in sustaining success – that's what we are all trying to do. It's in every facet of your program. Who you are hiring and who you are signing and what you are doing offensively and defensively and how well you practice. All of those things are factors in sustaining success."

Georgia Head Coach Mark Fox

On Yante Maten being selected as Preseason Player of the Year...

"He knows it's kind of like getting the Homecoming King – it doesn't mean a whole lot. We really haven't talked about the preseason award. We'll have to talk about how to handle that. What's most important is that at the end of the year he's in the same conversation. He's a terrific player, and we expected a lot of these accolades for him, and we don't worry about him not being able to handle it because he has such great character."

On the strength of the SEC...

"Last year everyone thought it was coach speak that we talked about how good the league was. Then I think we proved that we were telling the truth. We proved that the national respect was back for this league. We don't have to do a lot of selling of the quality of teams in it, and people are excited for the season."

Kentucky Head Coach John Calipari



On the Kentucky team...

"This is a young team. I feel an anxiety because I want the individual players to play well. My hands aren't on the panic button yet. My feet are on the panic button, but my hands are not there yet. We are really young."

On Kentucky's youth...

"Anyone who has young players knows that it's hard to help them create habits that are going to help them win. You can't worry about eliminating other habits, forget it. Just create these new six or seven habits. But the only way it becomes a habit is you do it every day and are focused on it. It's a process."

LSU Head Coach Will Wade

On the SEC preseason media poll...

"There is nowhere to go but up. We came in last place last year and lost our leading scorer to the NBA. If you look at it, that's what most logical people would probably say. Do I think we are going to finish there? No. Does our team think we are going to finish there? No. I think it's a logical place for us to picked, and we need to go to work each day to improve and make sure we don't prove everybody right."

On changing the culture of a basketball program...

"You start it each day, and like I tell our players, never bet against consistent behavior. The more consistent you are, the better you are every day, then you'll position yourself to have an opportunity to win and be successful. We want to create good habits every day."

Ole Miss Head Coach Andy Kennedy

On Ole Miss' history with strong guards...

"We have been fortunate. We have found guys who fit our system. We've had a number of guys who have had a lot of success in being able to make plays, and we put them in a position to be able to do so. We have a group of guys this year who will continue that history."

On Ole Miss being picked 10th in the SEC and the strength of the SEC...

"I will try to use it to motivate our guys maybe one afternoon, but for us we don't really get caught up too much in that. This is year 12 for me. Top to bottom it's as good as the league has been in my tenure. The top has always been strong. There have been nationals champions come out of this league for a long time. The middle has always been good. The difference now is the back has gotten better."

Mississippi State Head Coach Ben Howland



On the Mississippi State backcourt...

"Our strength is our backcourt, no question. Because of that, we are going to end up playing small this year, which will be difficult in our league. I have to figure out ways to get them all quality minutes, because that is how we have the best chance to get the best players on the floor."

On the strength of the SEC...

"The league is a monster. When you look at our league right now it's really trending upward. You go up and down the league. Our league is loaded with NBA prospects, and a number of guys are going to get drafted. Top to bottom nobody is an easy game."

Missouri Head Coach Cuonzo Martin

On being back in the SEC...

"It's good. Obviously it's a great league. There is a lot of talent and great coaching. In my opinion just watching the SEC from afar, it's probably the best it's been in the last 20 years top to bottom talent and the level of skill on the perimeter as well as big guys. I think it will be a fun year."

On the excitement around the Missouri program...

"Energy is high. Just when you talk about the game against Kansas alone, tickets sold out in a matter of minutes. I think our fans are excited. We had a tough couple of years. Our guys went through a lot. They've stayed the course. But I think the energy across the state is high."

South Carolina Head Coach Frank Martin

On the calendar turning to a new season...

"I don't get to enjoy college football as much now in October. September is awesome for me. On Saturdays I watch us play a lot and watch as much as I can, but now it's October and that brings tremendous joy to me. I get to coach ball and impact kids and their growth, utilizing basketball to help them achieve and learn how to trust. We have some knew guys, but we also have guys who have been through it."

On what to take from last year's team...

"Everyone talks about the outside noise. Anyone who says they don't listen to the outside noise is not being completely honest, but I'm big on the inside noise. You have to make sure that your noise inside is a lot louder and a lot more powerful than the noise on the outside. That creates trust among each other, and what I learned from last season is just believe. Don't ever stop believing. Because it can happen at any time for any team. That was reinforced last year."



Tennessee Head Coach Rick Barnes

On how close the Tennessee is to being able to compete for a bid to the NCAA Tournament...

"I think we are close. I think we were close a year ago. We were right there and just couldn't finish it. We have guys back and they have improved. With what we've added we have a chance to be right there with everybody."

On Tennessee's schedule...

"Our philosophy as a staff is we have always played a tough schedule, because the one thing I do know is that if you are sitting there on selection Sunday and you don't get into the tournament because of your non-conference schedule you have no one to blame but yourself, so we aren't going to let that happen. Plus I think if you really study what the NCAA Tournament Committee wants, they want you to go play people, and I have been doing this long enough to know that you can't have those big wins if you don't put yourself in a position to get them."

Texas A&M Head Coach Billy Kennedy

On the offseason for the Texas A&M team...

"From the spring on our guys made a commitment to not let some of the same things happen in the offseason that happened before from a work ethic standpoint or from playing together or getting to know each other. Their motto is Do More, and I think we've done more to prepare ourselves for this season."

On the expectations for the Aggies...

"This is my seventh year at Texas A&M. We want to take the next step. We thought we did with the Sweet 16 team and hit a little bump last year. We have really good talent and we've had some good recruiting classes. We expect some great things. It comes with the schedule and hopefully that will help prepare us for the NCAA Tournament at the end of the year."

Vanderbilt Head Coach Bryce Drew

On the difference between the first year and second year at Vanderbilt...

"We are further along with principles and philosophies just because we have players returning from last year who understand what we are trying to do and things that we are trying to do and things that we are trying to implement into our offense and defense. On the other end you take out a players like a Luke Kornet or a Nolan Cressler, some guys that have great experience and you are throwing in 17 and 18 year olds, it doesn't look quite as good out there, so getting those guys up to speed is going to take some time."



On the strength of the SEC...

"As you look as a whole, last year I thought the league was very underrated. It proved to be true in the end, getting five teams in the tournament and three in the Elite Eight. If you look on paper, we have more top-100 recruits coming in than in any league in the country. We have more projected lottery picks than any other league in the country according to some draft scales. All indications are that the league should be even better."



SEC Women's Basketball

Media Day Quotes

Alabama Head Coach Kristy Curry

On the Alabama team...

"We are excited. We return more points and more experience than anyone in the SEC. We want to be the first team to get this things back in 19 years to the NCAA Tournament. We have a lot of experience. We are really excited."

"I was blessed to work for Leon Barmore. He taught me an awful lot. I had a chance to be a 33-year old head coach at Purdue and go the Final Four, then went to Texas Tech and brought that program back to the NCAA Tournament. We have a lot of experiences to draw from. We feel like we are in a position at Alabama where we are ready to take that next step. We have recruited at a high level. It's a family and without the support from the administration we wouldn't be where we are headed."

Arkansas Head Coach Mike Neighbors

On leaving Washington for Arkansas...

"It wasn't easy. A lot of people think that because it is home it would be an easy decision, but what we had built there was really special. And what we had coming back I was really excited about. But home is home and family is always family to me. The opportunity doesn't come knocking very often. You have to recognize when that happens. Otherwise that opportunity will cease to exist. It worked out. It was great timing."

On taking the Arkansas program to a higher level...

"We are going to use the same blue print, and it's getting the right people. The right people on the staff and the right people in the locker room. That was the blue print. You get the right people in there and you set a really high standard and hold each other accountable. That was job one from day one."

Auburn Head Coach Terri Williams-Flournoy

On the high point of the year last year...

"I think the games we won on the road, and probably our comeback wins. Twice we were down by 17 and came back to win those games. It speaks to the caliber of our players and how much determination they had."

On Auburn's offense...



"We are going to put offensive sets together that fit this team. We have some creators and some shooters, but I think it's going to be more creating an offense that fits this team. We do have post players this year, so we do have some choices there in the post."

Florida Head Coach Cam Newbauer

On the first thing he wanted to tell

I wanted to talk to them about the fact that someone else's opinion doesn't have to become a reality. It doesn't matter what everyone has said about the past and where we were and what has transpired at Florida. It's about who we are going to be for each moment here and now. We can control our own destiny if we work hard enough and have the best attitude."

On the plan moving forward at Florida...

"First and foremost is our culture – the culture in the locker room, on campus and in the community. That's the foundation for who we are to become and what we are going to do. Our players have done a terrific job of embracing that. If you don't care enough about each other in the locker room, then what's going to happen when you get on the court? We have to keep working to move forward and be better."

Georgia Head Coach Joni Taylor

On areas to improve on for Georgia this season...

"I think for us it's to be the best we can be every day. We have a talented group of freshmen. Our upperclassmen need to lead by example, because our freshmen are going to be key for us to have the success that we want. We want to maximize that every day."

On the best moment she has had in her tenure so far...

"There have been a lot of moments. The biggest thing for us is seeing our players grow. My moments are with those players and the light clicks on for them and they get it, then they can thrive in their roles."

Kentucky Head Coach Matthew Mitchell

On 11 years at Kentucky...

"I tell people if you need proof of miracles, here I am. Eleven years at Kentucky. It's been awesome though. I started out as a high school teacher and coach and had dreams and aspirations, but I don't know if you ever think you are going to be sitting at a place like Kentucky when you are talking about coaching basketball. There are some places that are pretty great to do that, and Kentucky may be the best as far as how basketball is appreciated. I've been very grateful for my time there. We have



been blessed with great players and great support from our administration and fans."

On leaving last year behind...

"The previous year you try to learn what's valuable and take that with you. We don't spend a lot of time in the past. Every year everyone is different. That's a different situation. Change is all a part of it in college. It really is a brand new team every year. Experience can help you and we try to draw wisdom from the past, but we pretty much start fresh every year."

LSU Head Coach Nikki Fargas

On this year's LSU team...

"The best thing about it is that we have depth. We have rotations in practice and can go against each other. We are young and we are teaching a whole new defensive system to five freshmen. The returning players are such a positive for us. They are going to be great leaders. I hope the team understands – especially the young ones – that the game doesn't know your age."

On Raigyne Louis...

"You have someone who is seasoned, who understands what it means to play on both sides of the basketball. She was the SEC Defensive Player of the Year. She is more than just a basketball player for our program. She is a great leader for our team. She is just a terrific person."

Ole Miss Head Coach Matt Insell

On the Ole Miss team...

"This is the most excited about a team that I have had. This is year five. We have built up our roster. I like our depth. The speed is where I want it. This is a team that returns a lot. We signed a good recruiting class. I expect a lot of them to play. I am excited about this team. We are going to put them on the road and test them early."

On his expectations for this season...

"We want to get back to the NCAAT. We feel like if we aren't there we will be disappointed. Our players feel like we have that type of team. They put that expectation on themselves. If they want to be there they have to be there. They have it."

Mississippi State Head Coach Vic Schaefer

On the win over UConn...



"Obviously it was a special moment in time, but this team is different. We are really different right now. This team is going to be different from last year's team. That's not to say that we aren't going to be better or worse, but we're different. We are ready to move on and see what this senior class and the rest of our team – what kind of season they'll have."

On what his team is concentrating on this time of the year...

"We have five new players. Some of those kids are going to have to play meaning minutes for us. You are laying your foundation and teaching those kids how hard they have never played before in their life and how hard they have to play. The speed of the game for our four freshmen and one transfer is the hardest piece really. You are trying to lay the foundation, but the speed of our game in our league is the hardest thing for a newcomer to get."

Missouri Head Coach Robin Pingeton

On the upcoming season...

"We're excited about the season. The SEC is so tough from top to bottom. That's the biggest difference between our league and any other league. There's not any game that you can just show up. Every game is going to be a dog fight. On any given night anybody can beat anybody in this league. If you a competitor this is the league you want to be in because you are playing against the best of the best.

On the buzz around both the men's program and women's program at Missouri... "We have worked really hard at building our women's program. It's been fun to see our fan base continue to increase, so we want the men's program to be successful, and we've also had a special environment at Mizzou Arena. We appreciate our fan base and community."

South Carolina Head Coach Dawn Staley

On what has stood out the most about winning the NCAA Championship...
"What has stood out is the collection of people that it has touched. Our state has been incredible. Our fans have been so gracious and kind and supportive throughout our first eight years of my career at South Carolina that they are most deserving of this championship, and I have shared it with everybody you could imagine. All of those players wanted that vision of winning a national championship, and that escaped that. What's delayed is not denied, and we finally got it."

On whether winning a national championship has changed her...

"It doesn't. It's something I wanted to do, but being a coach and going in and out of seasons, new is different every single year and the challenge of getting a team to come together to play on the last day or last weekend of the NCAA Tournament is



always something that I'm drawn to. We are the defending national champions. How do we get back there? How do we get a team that lost three seniors to the WNBA Draft back to that place again? I wouldn't be here without what I think is the best staff in the county. We have to figure out a way of getting back to that place."

Tennessee Head Coach Holly Warlick

On the Tennessee team...

"We have a great group. They are hard-working and competitive. There is a little bit of an older group and four new freshmen. They are really gelling together, and we're excited about what they are going to do."

On the high expectations at Tennessee...

"It's a tradition. It's what we do. If we don't have a season where we don't go to the Final Four or we don't win it, we've had a bad year. We understand that. It's what we've built. It's what Pat (Summitt) started. It's the legacy of this program and it's our expectation. We are going to put the team on the floor that is going to get us there."

Texas A&M Head Coach Gary Blair

On last season...

"Last year was one of the most rewarding seasons we've had even though we got beat in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. We had 10 players and only played six. We had some young ladies step up their game. We just banded together and said we'll find a way. It was really a drama-free year for a coach and that is unusual in today's society. I just enjoyed coaching that team."

On his consistency at Texas A&M...

"Everything depends on recruiting, but at the same time there is a saying at Texas A&M that tradition never graduates. I've been lucky over the years to be with great programs at Louisiana Tech, then Stephen F. Austin, then Arkansas, then going to my dream school Texas A&M. Every day I feel like a young kid who can coach forever. I want to be able to give back to the game because the game has been very good to me. These young kids today keep me young."

Vanderbilt Head Coach Stephanie White

On her first season a year ago...

"It was a whirlwind but we wanted to worry about Vanderbilt basketball and who we wanted to be. We wanted to establish our culture and how we want to play. So reflecting back I think we grew as a team and we got better as a team. More than anything I think we laid the foundation for who we want to be. I got to know our



players. I certainly know them on a different level than I did when we started, so that's a good thing, understanding how we push and challenge them individually."

On the differences between college and the WNBA...

"In the pros everything is much more fast-paced. Offensively and defensively, you are necessarily reacting but you don't have as much time to plan. It's much more about concepts. It's a gauntlet. We practiced a lot more probably in the first three months of the college season than we probably practiced in three years of the WNBA season. For me it's going back to the basics and not trying to move too fast."