

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

Monday July 15, 2019

Barry Odom

Missouri Tigers

GREG SANKEY: I'm back. I needed those five minutes to study up on our first coach. Barry Odom is in the fourth season as the head coach at the University of Missouri. He has lead his team to nine straight wins in November, 4-0 each of the last two seasons in November, 10-2 overall in that month under his leadership. So he's pretending that November is every month from now on.

He and his family get away to Dauphin Island during the summer. My notes say if you go to his house, he grills the best steak in Columbia, and there's a legend that he committed the play of Mizzou while having surgery to repair an ACL. He can tell you whether that's true or not. Barry is a fan, which I love, because any time something great happens in the Southeastern Conference, my phone lights up with a text for Barry Odom. Barry?

BARRY ODOM: Good to see you guys, and I know that you're in for an exhilarating next couple of days. And I want to thank Commissioner Sankey and his staff for always -- any event that the Southeastern Conference puts on, whether it's a game, an event like this, an opportunity for a student-athletes to visit and grow in the ways that they provide for our student-athletes, it's always done with a stamp of excellence, and I'm honored to be here today. I'm honored to be part of the Southeastern Conference, and I appreciate the work that Greg and his entire staff put on to pull something off like this.

I always want to thank the media as well. I think there are a number of ways that you look at the platform that you guys help our student-athletes and provide them opportunities to tell their story. You look at the competition side of the sport of football for us for three and a half hours on a Saturday. There's so much more to being a student-athlete, and you guys have done such a terrific job uncovering our league on making sure that the stories are told, and I commend you for that, and I hope that you keep it up because it's ways that changes our kids' lives. And a lot of times, you are the story that gets that out there and I appreciate that.

You look at, for us, going into 2019, our football team, and the way that we're made, the way that our team is built, it starts for us within our locker room with a



culture that we have set, a culture and the leadership, the ability to take guys -- our roster is made up of 117 guys from all over the country.

We have three guys here today, student-athletes, and they have all got different stories. One is a transfer quarterback, Kelly Bryant, who is going into his last season. One is from Kearney, Missouri, Cale Garrett, who will lead as one of the best linebackers ever to play at Mizzou, and one is from Dallas, Texas, DeMarkus Acy.

I'm proud of the way these guys have led our team. They are a small group of who they are. Look at the things that this group has done on the offseason workouts, been ready since our last bowl game when it concluded in late December. They've decided to raise the bar on who we want to be and how we're going to go do it and the culture of our entire organization is going to be our edge as we get into the 2019 season.

I love my staff, and I love our team. I think you look at the way that we've spent time, we've committed to time spent with our players and our student-athletes on the personal development side of it, on the personal development side of moving our program forward. Our team has embraced that. We're all aligned with the same vision and direct approach on how we can be our best throughout our habits, our preparation. It's called, for us, the winning process of how we go about things.

I'm fortunate that the staff that we have, it's the best group that I've ever been around. And I don't like to get into a lot of comparisons, but I look at the group and the experience that they bring to the table. I'm fortunate that I'm surrounded by a whole bunch of guys that are like-minded, and they are there to serve our kids.

You look at the organization and the culture that we've got not only assistant coaches, but our recruiting department, academic staff, strength and conditioning, sports medicine, the Mizzou made program, it makes us who we are. We look at the idea of our opportunities right now as coaches or leaders. We're teachers, and we've got an opportunity to take our young team and develop and mold them in three, four, five years, and turn them out to the real world as better persons, better dads, better husbands, better fathers.

That's my job, that's my role, and I embrace it every day to have the opportunity to do that.

I'm honored and humbled to be the coach of the Missouri Tigers, this group specifically, all of the work that we have done, and we're going to be moving into the 2019 season. We've got great momentum. You look at the things that we've accomplished off the field. We've got the highest GPA that a Mizzou football team has ever had in back-to-back semesters. I'm proud of that.

I'm proud of the work they've done. You look at the opportunity that we have had over 50 guys with above 3.0 GPA. That doesn't happen overnight. It happens because you recruited the right kids. They are brought into the program. They are willing to follow direction and they do it together with each other.

The idea of the concept of "we" over "me," we talk about it all of the time in our program. We talk about the culture of not just of the people on our team, but also the people who influence and touch all the people on our team. Our organization is so much bigger than myself. We understand we've got an opportunity with this platform to represent somebody and something a lot bigger than ourselves, the state of Missouri, the fans, who I'm so thankful for, the folks that have built Mizzou football into what it is today. It's our job to take that and continue to move forward along with the winning process.

You look at the scope of what our team and how it's made up of, I'm proud of the opportunity with the momentum that we have, coming off of last year, the carryover of habits, the way those -- the vision, the way they look from day to day, the operations and how we function. They've developed into the concept and the opportunity just to be focused on being the best "them." Be the best version of yourself. And we focused and spent a lot of time talking about that.

The depth of our team, if you look upfront, it's built on the line of scrimmage, on both offensive and defensive line. We've got three guys on the offensive line in Yasir Durant, Trystan Castillo Tre'Vour Simms, who played more snaps than anybody in our league as close to that. They've got an opportunity to leave their mark on Mizzou, to take a number of guys into this arena and be very proud of what they represent and what they stand for.

If you move outside of the line of scrimmage on the offensive side, Johnathon Johnson is 800 yards away from being the all-time leading receiver at the University of Missouri. That means something. Those guys do it collectively together. We've got a really good group of eight returning starters on offense. We've got five to

six on defense, kind of whichever way you look at it, but it's a group with experience that looks forward to carrying the momentum that we have and the opportunity that's in front of us with a challenge of our league and the way that it starts and the schedule lays out.

The way that the team transformed over the offseason, they took an opportunity when we were dealt some information from the NCAA, and they took that as an opportunity, and a life lesson for us. Okay. For me as a leader of the group, okay, life is not fair. Okay. For us, as you look at it, what do you control? And any amount of time spent thinking on that, the what ifs, then you get off the focus and habits that it takes to be the successful person that we need to be and the successful team that we're going to be. We don't control any of that. Okay. So what we focused on is controlling our attitude and having absolutely zero excuses.

Again, our culture has stood the test of time with this, and it will be our edge. We are going to have one player on our entire roster enter the portal system. I'm proud of that. That means that our kids are invested in wanting to be student-athletes at the University of Missouri.

You talk about the experience and the leadership throughout our locker room and throughout our program. Everybody's got a story on how they ended up at Mizzou, but collectively, together, they're excited about leaving their mark on our program and taking the Mizzou brand and continuing to move it forward.

So, it will be a very, very rewarding experience when you look at a locker room and the way that our group is made up. It doesn't matter where you're from or what your last name is, it doesn't matter the experiences that you've had. It shapes who we are, the work, the preparation, the foundation that we have built during that time. We've got an opportunity and it's one of the most beautiful things when a team gets aligned in their vision and their beliefs. We've got an opportunity to do that now that we're looking at in a very short order about 37 days kicking this season off.

So I'm thankful to be here, excited about this group. And at this time we'll open it up for any questions we've got in the room.

Q. I wanted to ask about Kelly Bryant. What do you think is the key getting him to Missouri? How does he fit in? What does he bring to table for you?

BARRY ODOM: When Kelly stepped on campus for his official visit, I saw interaction between him and our team in the locker room. It was a natural fit. He's a very selfless person, low, low ego. And one of the best

competitors I have ever been around. That fit with who we are as a program and as an organization. I also look at the opportunity when you look at the makeup of the guys returning on that side of the ball on stepping in the quarterback position, he's going to make some mistakes. All quarterbacks do. We need ten guys around him to play really well.

But also the fit that he had when he was on campus, there's times that through the recruiting process, you can tell the story over and over and over over the phone, through graphics and pictures, but when you get a kid on campus, you get a prospect on campus, and you see the structure we have, the culture, the ownership of our team with our players, everybody that touches them they know they'll have success. We give them the platform to go be successful and guys want to be a part of that. They see it. They're attracted to it. And it was a very, very natural fit.

Q. Coach, you talk about Kelly and his impact. What are your overall thoughts on the transfer portal just having gone through kind of a full year of this thing?

BARRY ODOM: Yeah, the thing with how you build your roster, and you know, it's unique for every situation, and our opinion is at Mizzou, the ways that you always want to try to -- you want to improve your roster through recruiting in every area, then how do you build that? The approach of grad transfers, of high school, junior college, how is your program built? You've got to make sure, and we do, from the inside out, that it's built that we're all in for Mizzou.

I don't want a situation where a guy steps in that doesn't fit with the culture of who we are and doesn't want to do it the Mizzou way because then the experience that they have won't be what they are looking for. So the ways through the transfer portal, I think would have been very, very open to finding out how it's going to fit, how does it work, you know, what the opportunities are there. But also, there's more time that I need before I have a firm belief in, yeah, this is a great thing or not.

I also, I look at experiences for student-athletes. You know, for them, in the short window they've got to be a student-athlete, a college student-athlete, I want it to be the best experience it can be for that kid. Okay. And fortunate we are in the category that we haven't had guys leave. They've wanted to be at Mizzou. Is that going to change? I'm sure it will over time, that we'll have a player leave and enter the portal, but right now, it's too early for me to stand and say, exactly how I feel -- the good or the bad with that.

I know we've got to be really -- you know, you got to be open and really study on what's out there and what's

available because the roster management just has increased. The time you spent on that has increased so much with those opportunities.

Q. Following up on that, I mean, you mentioned the time you spend on looking through transfer portals and things like that, roster management and building. Just how much time do you dedicate to that and how -- whenever you looked at that, obviously with Kelly Bryant coming in, how much time do you dedicate or maybe that's something you do with your staff? How do you manage that in?

BARRY ODOM: I think every coach that's here today have different ways that they run their program. Mizzou is not unique in that much as our recruiting department. We've got a couple guys designated in that area that help us out on all of the different aspects of recruiting, and this has become one of them.

So the amount of time you spend recruiting, it's day-to-day attention to every aspects of recruiting, but also to have the idea of how you project the players at your position on your current roster and then as an immediate need that can step in and help us through the transfer process. I think it's different for every team. And ours we have been able and been very fortunate to hit on guys that have come in and help us with immediate needs.

Q. Coach, you transitioned from defensive coordinator to head coach. This is your fourth season. How has your philosophy changed and what have you learned now that you set your culture for your organization as head coach to put your stamp on Missouri football?

BARRY ODOM: You learn you're always learning from your experiences. Fortunately and unfortunately you take some hits along the way and you learn from it. You want to make sure that the things that you do you don't go back and make that mistake again. The things us did well, you are going to find out why and move forward. I think self-evaluation and critique is really, really important. That's another reason I'm so thank follow for my staff because we have open, honest conversations in our staff room.

I don't have all of the answers, but together collectively, we find out the best answer for our team in the staff room and we walk out the door, we're all on the same page. That's helped me more than anything. I also look at the coordinators on both sides, Derek Dooley on offense, Ryan Walters on defense. We have a comfort level we're playing smart football together. We understand the times on how we're playing offensively or defensively, there is give and take on both of that together. There's staff harmony that we have in the

room that makes us a better football team.

Q. Barry, you mentioned about the transfers, nobody transfer. Back in February, you were upset with some SEC schools coming after your players. Why do you think it played out the way it did with everybody staying?

BARRY ODOM: I think there's a number of reasons why it did. I think number one the leadership of the team inside the locker room by our players, you look at the things that they've done together, the investment they had with each other, the brotherhood, the love, and the care for each other.

I think they drew a line in the sand and said this is what we're going to do in 2019 as a team together, and they stood by it. That's a close, close group, and I think those opportunities that were presented to us are going to help us as we get down into the fall into the season.

Q. Barry, I wanted to ask a follow-up on Kelly Bryant. As a former defensive coach, what do you think makes him a problem for defenses? And also you have Jonathan Nance, a former Arkansas player, how is he sitting in? What kind of season are you expecting from him?

BARRY ODOM: As a coach, you want to be a great teacher. That's our job is be tremendous educators and put our kids in position to play well and use their skill set. Kelly's skill set at the quarterback position allows us an opportunity in the things that he's been able to do, in the vertical passing game, the intermediate passing game, play action, moving the pocket, but also some quarterback run that will help our team out.

That's also his growth as a quarterback, as I saw from practice one to 15, the things that he was able to do that we have done previously in our offense. He has a really good grasp of that. So it allows a lot of different things that you have to defend from a defensive standpoint, and I think every quarterback obviously is a little unique and different, but Kelly has got a skill set that through the air or on the ground, he's going to be able to help us and gain an advantage in a number of different ways from that position.

You asked about Jonathan Nance, who is a transfer, plays wide receiver, he was able to start school in January, went through winter conditioning program, and then spring practice. And right now, if we lined up in the depth chart and started practice tomorrow, he would be one of the starters at the wide receiver position.

I've got a number of guys battling for those jobs, but he

did a nice job understanding the scheme of what we're trying to do offensively. And by the end of spring, he was able to play to his speed because he understood the concepts and what we're asking out of the play.

Q. I can't believe more people aren't asking you questions, but --

BARRY ODOM: We can go outside and just you and I can talk.

Q. It's probably going to be late this month when Missouri's administration gets their hearing with the NCAA. How often are you guys going to get the post season ban lifted? What's it like having to wait for that? What's it like for you and the players?

BARRY ODOM: The thing I talked about with the momentum I have going in our program, the amount of time we would spend on any of those thoughts, Bob, really it doesn't do anything for us beneficially to move our program forward. It's wasted. It's out of our control, wasted thoughts.

Now, you look at the opportunity when that's going to come about, we don't know. We anticipate that hopefully we'll get some closure soon. I am thankful for the way that our administration has approached it. I'm thankful for our legal counsel and the way they've helped and assisted and outside counsel.

I also look at, is it a very aggressive approach and also with respect. And the way that the course goes, we'll find out and come to closure with it one way or the other in the near future and the way I handle that with my team will be just like I have everything else, very direct, open and honest in where we're going, what the opportunities are, and how we're going to move past it.

Q. The recruiting schedule, the way that it's -- the calendar has changed and now there's so much in the summer months, do you like the changes that have happened or would you like to see it go back a little bit to the way it was?

BARRY ODOM: Well, I'm going to talk out of both sides of my mouth and try not to give you coach talk, but the month of June kind of disappeared. You've got -- it's June 1st. You've got official visits. You've got camps. You've got your own kids on campus. It's flown by.

It has also worked really well for the University of Missouri at this time. The momentum that we have, we've got a new building being constructed that we're going to move into next week at the south end zone of our stadium. So the recruits that came on campus in June were able to go through that. And that is something, for us, for the student-athlete experience,

it's been a game-changer for us. And I'm excited about that. They also get to see the investment that our fans have in making Mizzou football a place and an experience that we want to be a part of.

But also with the early signing in December for us now, that's become the signing date, and then so the calendar has sped up. I hope we don't speed it up anymore. I think we need to get a grasp and kind of continue to evaluate what's best for everybody involved from the college coach to the prospect to the high school coach and all of the families that are involved with that.

Q. I wanted to get your take on the SEC East. If I remember this, I think the east beat the west last year head-to-head. So your analysis of the division, if you think you guys should be a contender this season.

BARRY ODOM: I think the opportunity -- it's the greatest league in college football, the SEC. So you look at the opportunities that we have, and we've got to go play our best game on August 31st. And everybody is going to be mad at this answer, but I look at, if we are our best, okay, if I do the job that I'm supposed to do, in our habits and our preparation and our training and our minimal approach, and it all matches up and aligns on the process we need to have to play our best, then hopefully we get into the month of November that Commissioner Sankey mentioned earlier. And he is right. We changed every calendar in our building. Every month is November because we've had success in that month.

But hopefully we get to that point, and we're in the conversation of having a chance to continue to play.

Q. Coach, how would you evaluate the job Derek Dooley did in his first year as offensive coordinator?

BARRY ODOM: He was a great fit for us, was able to put together on that side of the ball with offensive staff, put together a scheme that allowed our kids to use their skills, and also play with confidence.

He's done a tremendous job recruiting, and he also sees the big picture because he was a previous head coach. He has been good for me because I've been able to bounce ideas off him and ask. And he's been very open and honest about his answers and things that he had success with, things that if he had a chance to do it again, how he would approach it differently, and that's been good for us. It's been good for our organization.

We've done a great job developing relationships within the team, and I'm thankful we've got him back for

another year.

Q. I think your staff has seven black assistant coaches. I think that might be the most in the SEC. How much do you keep diversity in mind when constructing your staff?

BARRY ODOM: You look at, I want the best coach, mentor, leader that we can have for our kids. And the approach of having diversity within our locker room and our staff and the ideas of putting the right guys in the right spots for -- to lead our program on our team, that is what I'm focussed on, and I think we've got a tremendous staff. Of everybody that we've got in our room and our entire organization, the ego is really, really low. We care about serving our kids the right way, and I'm thankful that I have an opportunity to be the head coach with this group.

Q. When you look at DeMarkus Acy, what is the biggest change you've seen in him from the day he stepped on campus freshman year?

BARRY ODOM: DeMarkus has made progress every year. The experience has helped him a great deal and learning from those experiences, there's times that he has played at a really, really high level and has lost focus and had to rebound and come back to it. I think mentally, he's in a better position, the grind of a game on what it takes to play that position, I think he's in a much better spot now just because he's been in the battles. He understands it. I look forward to him having a great year for us.

Q. Coach, during the off season, I know there was some talk about other programs, maybe approaching some of your players. Is that something that you brought up with the league office and how much of an issue could that be with the transfer portals as far as other programs actively recruiting within other programs?

BARRY ODOM: Well, we've got within our conference, the leadership, William King, and Greg Sankey on all of those issues. I think one of the things that has helped in a lot of ways is we got open dialogue and open communication. And those guys in the leadership positions have assisted through all of the different things that come across your desk. And I appreciate the approach that we took collectively, but also, you know, there's a number of things going through that we're always trying to make our game better.

The NCAA has got a number of things that legislatively, we've got to decide on. There's always discussions on how to make the game better to move it forward. And I know, you know, the count of 85 scholarships, 25 on the hard signing, you know, those are all discussions that we have. And I don't know that everybody -- or anyone has exactly the perfect answer, but we're

always moving and trying to make our game better in every area, and that would be one of them.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the Fayetteville guys. You've got three guys from Fayetteville on your team, Byers, Powell and Banister. I think Banister is on scholarship right? Could you say something about each of those guys? This is Kevin's ninth year doing this. I was wondering as a coach, how do you think he does. How does he make you feel comfortable kind of running traffic control with this thing?

BARRY ODOM: I lost you for a minute, Bob. I'll start with your first question. I don't know where it went from there. Akial Byers will be a starter for us in some capacity on the defensive line. He's had a tremendous off season. He is up to 290, 295, runs really well, explosive player that's made big plays for us. He has great versatility. He can play either the end spots or inside. I am excited about the way he's grown.

Barrett Banister came us to as a walk-on wide receiver and has earned a scholarship, made some huge third-down catches for us last year in critical times, is exactly every day you get the best Barrett Banister that he can be, and he's done a tremendous job. And Taylor Powell is in the quarterback room and has developed, really had his best spring that we've seen thus far, has continued to move his game forward and he's going to end up helping us.

All three are great teammates, and they've done such a great job on being leaders, but also being tremendous guys to share a locker room with.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach. Thank you for your time.



2019 SEC Football Media Days Missouri Player Quotes Monday, July 15

Senior Defensive Back DeMarkus Acy

On what it feels like to represent Missouri ...

"It is an honor to be picked to represent. The road goes through here, and Coach Odom said just to be announced is to be a part of great programs. I took it as a challenge to be here."

On being able to use the new South endzone...

"I am very excited. We were supposed to get in this month, but it got delayed. We are very excited. There are a lot of new amenities with wearables. I'm excited to get in there and get to work."

On bracing the quarterback situation...

"We are bracing it very well. We were open arms, and he came in. He adjusted really well. One of the first stages is having a positive impact, and he stuck with us."

On what the team has done to improve the defense and how he feels...

"I feel very comfortable in the passing game defense. We got another year under our belt. I feel very confident in this year with the guys."



2019 SEC Football Media Days

Missouri Player Quotes

Monday, July 15

Senior Quarterback Kelly Bryant

On how fast coaches began to contact him once he entered the transfer portal, and what made him choose Missouri ...

“Right when I put myself in the portal and coaches could contact me, Missouri was the first school that contacted me. It was a crazy process. When I went out there on a visit, I just pretty much fell in love with everything that they had to offer. For me, within that last year, the biggest thing for me was that I have one year to get it right, and I can’t have any slip-ups. They knew it, and they were selling me on how Drew (Lock) had the success he had within the year when he put himself in the position to be where he wanted to be, and at the end of the year, he was a second-round draft pick. I was like, okay, that’s a box check for me – how they can grow me into the quarterback that I want to be, being able to play at the next level.”

On how he reacted to the postseason ban after everything he had been through ...

“It was a weird day. I was in the facility, and all of the sudden, everybody was getting a text message that we were having a team meeting that wasn’t planned. For me, I thought, “did someone get fired and they didn’t tell me about it?” Hearing Coach Odom deliver the message, he just laid it out there for us. He was open, he said, “if anybody wants to leave, no one is going to look at you any differently. You have the opportunity to stay here as well.” He said they were going to try to appeal it, and that it is going to be a process. Just hearing that, I was like, first and foremost, I don’t want to leave. I don’t want to go through that recruiting process over again, and I already built the relationship in that month or two, with those guys, I was already establishing myself and just working every day. This is where I want to be. I made the decision, so I am not going to turn back on it now.”

On how Coach (Derek) Dooley has been helping his game ...

“Well, the pitch for me coming to Missouri, he saw what I did at Clemson. He loved the things he saw from a passing standpoint and also what I can do with my legs, because I can make plays with my legs and I am able to extend plays. Being where he was with the (Dallas) Cowboys, seeing Dak (Prescott), seeing Tony (Romo), having that experience with them and the Cowboys offense, and bringing it to Missouri, being able to put yourself in the position where he’s going to make plays for you where you’re comfortable. He is not going to call anything where he is comfortable and the quarterback is not comfortable. He is going to cater to you, and just knowing that, I have that in my pocket where I can go into a meeting and say “I like this” or “I don’t like this, so let’s do this”, and he is going to cater to you. That’s just been one of the biggest things that I like about playing for him so far.”



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Senior Linebacker Cale Garrett

On his personal journey and getting the opportunity to play football at Missouri...

"I have had a lot of people help me along the way. If you want to talk about my journey, you have to talk about all of the people that have helped me get here. First off, it starts with my mom, the person who gave birth to me. She is the one who inspired me to be my best every day. She demanded the most out of me every day. She is a saleswoman, so she knows how to go get it. She taught me that at a young age. She taught me how to be a tough person too. Coming to Missouri was crazy. It was a dream come true being a Missouri boy. To play for your home university, it is really cool and it is really special. I know that I wasn't their first choice necessarily. I'm just thankful that Coach Odom took a chance on me. I thank him, whether he knows it or not. Maybe not to his face, but I thank him for that opportunity every day. That made me come in with a chip on my shoulder. I told him that I do not need any extra attention or an apology or anything like that. I'm going to come in here and I'm going to work hard every day. That is all I have done since. I just put my head down, look at what is in front of me and control what I can control."

On what it says about Coach Odom's program considering the fact that no seniors transferred after the postseason ban was issued...

"I think it says a lot about our entire program as a whole. Just looking first at the locker and the type of players we have. Most of us are guys that have come up together since freshman year, either as redshirts or true freshmen. We have been through a lot together. We have been through 4-8 seasons, we have been through 7-5 seasons and 8-4 seasons and all that. I think we want to go out together. We also know that we have a really good football staff, not only football wise but also in strength and conditioning that genuinely cares about us and give us their best on a daily basis. A lot of us understand that the grass isn't always greener on the other side, it is greener where you water it. We all want to grow together and go out the right way."

On the addition of Kelly Bryant...

"It is a privilege to have Kelly on our team. We all love him. He is a goofy dude. I think he was well received from day one. We all wanted to pick his brain. He knows how to win. He has played in those big games. He brings a lot to the table. He is a natural on and off of the field. He is a high character guy. On the football field, he can cause a lot of problems for a defense. We are really excited for him this year. He hit the ground running with us and almost blended right in. He looks like he has been here the whole time, which I think is really cool and it speaks a lot to who he is. I think that you could put him in a room with strangers and within five minutes, he would be friends with all of them."