

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Florida Gators

Todd Golden

Men's Media Day Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to resume our coaches press conference with Coach Golden at Florida. Coach, welcome to the SEC. At this time we'll take questions.

Q. Walk me through what it's going to be like -- I guess what it's already been like recruiting against Bruce, but then what it's going to be like the first time you actually step on the court against him?

TODD GOLDEN: You know what, I got good practice in my last role at San Francisco because I had to compete against Randy Bennett, who I played for. It was a unique experience battling against someone that you care about, someone that means a lot to you.

It's never going to be fun to recruit against those guys, but I think we're going to both be going after impactful players with decorated résumés. So that's going to happen being in this league.

I'm kind of looking forward to competing against him, to be honest. I think it's going to be really fun. We're both really, really big-time competitors. We love each other off the floor, but once we get in between the lines, it's going to be a great competition.

Q. Just a quick follow-up. Tell us some things that you have learned from Bruce and how those things have helped your career.

TODD GOLDEN: He is one of the hardest workers I've ever been around. I was fortunate enough to be with him when he first got the job at Auburn. Transparently, we had a lot of work to do in regards to recruiting and building up the program.

Just seeing his work ethic and how he led the group was really inspiring. I've always really respected how hard he is able to get his players to play for him and for the program.



Those are a couple of things that I definitely have taken from him.

Q. You're one of the six new coaches in the SEC. What do you think about that kind of turnover? And kind of coming from the West Coast, what was your perception of the SEC? I know you haven't obviously coached a game at Florida yet, but has anything changed being there and being at meetings and things like that?

TODD GOLDEN: In regards to the turnover, I think it's a little flukey in the sense that six jobs happened to turn over in one year.

You look at the West Coast where I was, very few jobs turned over. So I don't know if there's anything too much to talk about in that sense, but I feel like the league, I was relatively comfortable with it even being in the WCC the last few years because I was able to work in it from '14 to '16 with Bruce and got in when guys like Coach Barnes were getting hired. I think Muss was right after that.

Obviously, the coaching in this league has really taken off. I would say over the last seven to eight years, and that's a big reason as to why they've had a lot more success in regards to basketball here.

I feel like Florida is one of the better jobs in the league. I feel really fortunate to be here.

Q. Todd, talk about what style of play you would like to have this year, and do you have the personnel to do it? And just your long-range vision of what you want to see Florida basketball become.

TODD GOLDEN: You know what, we're always going to play a style that gives our players the best chance to be successful. So some years that might be trying to play fast and get out in transition. Some other years that might be slowing it down and trying to execute in the half court.

I think with Colin, who was picked obviously first team All-SEC preseason, I think he should be a preseason All-American. He gives us a great building block to be able to play off of in the low post, but we can also play off of him



at the elbow, top of the key. He is like the ultimate pressure release for our offense. Having him will be instrumental.

Kyle Lofton, who is here with us today also, is also great in the pick and roll. When you kind of have those bookends where you can score inside, play out of the pick and roll, I don't think you have to complicate it too much in regards to what you do.

We will always try to get out in transition and got efficient, easier baskets. I'm excited about the fact that I think we have ways to score in the half court as well.

Q. Just a couple of big-picture college basketball things. There's some movement on summer basketball and also some talk of expanding the NCAA tournament field. I wanted get your thoughts on both of those ideas.

TODD GOLDEN: Summer basketball I'm excited about. I think that would be great. We talked about it a little bit.

There's a time period towards the end of the summer where there's not a lot of things going on, so it could be an opportunity for SEC basketball to take a little more of the market share when there's not a lot happening.

So that would be neat, and I think it could be a unique experience for us.

In regards to -- sorry, the second question was? Tournament field. I kind of prefer where we are right now. I think 68 is a good number. When they expanded and created the first four, I thought that provided a good buffer for teams on the bubble in regards to allowing four extra teams in.

I'll be good either way now being here in the SEC, but I like 68.

Q. Not too long ago you played professional basketball overseas. How did that help you in your transition, and how has it helped you as your head coaching career has moved forward?

TODD GOLDEN: First and foremost, it just opened me up in terms of meeting a lot of new people, playing with guys that had played across the country. Like we talked about, we played in Israel, Richard and I, about the same time, and I had teammates from USC, Villanova, and South Carolina, guys from all over the place and got to meet those guys and also see how professional basketball was played and experience that. Especially the European game for two years.

Not a lot, but a decent amount of what we do offensively is derived from that. I think that was a great experience to kind of learn different styles and different ways to play offensively and defensively.

I think it gives me a little more -- the ability to talk to our guys in terms of how to be professionals and how to attack being a pro in regards to academics and athletics on a day-to-day basis.

Q. What is it that you have seen since you have been in Gainesville that convinces you or helps reinforce that Florida is one of the better jobs in the league?

TODD GOLDEN: Where should I start? It's a great city, great place to raise a family for my wife and I. It's a great college town, but it's also big enough where you can find different places where you don't necessarily feel like you're right around the college campus. That's unique.

From a basketball standpoint, obviously, the history and tradition in the fact that it's something that you can point to that it's not too long ago. When I was at San Francisco, we had some great history and tradition, but that was back in the '50s and '60s, long before any of our student-athletes had any clue what was going on.

You look back, and when I was playing from 2004 to 2008, Florida won two NCAA championships back-to-back. We have that.

Obviously, what Coach Donovan was able to do and Coach Kruger before him. The success has been there before, and Coach White did a good job as well, and I think we're in position to capitalize on that as well.

Q. Just wanted to ask you, my grandmother always used to say, you're getting older when the police officers start to look young. The SEC basketball coaches are starting to look young to me. The youth movement of the SEC, you're one of the new coaches, and five years or so ago it seemed like it was more movement towards bringing in older veteran coaches, and now they're bringing in more young coaches like yourself who are program-builders. What do you think that says about where the SEC is and what Florida is looking for from you?

TODD GOLDEN: I think each of us independently, obviously, built up a good enough résumé where some of the best athletic institutions in America thought we could come in and run their program.

I did it at San Francisco. Matt did it at Murray. Obviously,



Lamont did it at Chattanooga. Just to name a few. What Coach Jans did at New Mexico State was amazing.

Everybody had their level of success at places. Well, some of the places that generally didn't have a lot of success in the past, which I think says a lot.

Obviously, for us it's a big challenge. We come in here with coaches like Bruce, like obviously, Coach Cal, Muss, guys -- Coach Barnes, who have had a ton of success across their careers.

For me I feel like it's our time a little bit to come in here and challenge those guys and see if we can continue to raise the level of this league.

Q. What did Bruce say when you got the job?

TODD GOLDEN: Congratulations (laughing). No, he was great. I think he was -- he has been a big champion of mine over my career. Even as a player when I played for him in 2009 in Israel.

We go way back. About 2005 is when I first met Bruce. Steven and I, his son, played together on a team that played in Australia. He is a mentor of mine.

I think for him it was almost probably like a proud dad moment, you know, to see someone who had worked for him and kind of helped him build the foundation of Auburn, get an opportunity to run a program like Florida. I know he was proud of me, and he let me know that.

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