

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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LSU Tigers

Matt McMahon

Men's Media Day Press Conference

MATT McMAHON: Thanks so much. Really appreciate it. Very grateful and thankful for the opportunity to be here with you today.

We're three weeks out from our season opener. Absolutely love our players. We're now going about the process of building a team, which for me is one of the more fun parts of the job.

Excited about the opportunities ahead for our group. I'd love to open it up for any questions.

Q. I have a question about Justice Hill. What made him such a great player for you at Murray State, and how easy was it to welcome him to LSU, and how do you expect his game to transfer from Murray to now the SEC?

MATT McMAHON: Yeah, great questions. I love Justice. Comes from a great family, very high-character young man. Had an awesome season for us last year. Was one of the tops in the country in assist-to-turnover ratio. Had some monster games where he shot it extremely well from three. Had the game at Belmont where he was 8 of 10 from three, had 36 points. Played extremely well in our win at Memphis last season.

He's really grown and developed as a leader, which I think is so important at the point guard position. Elite athlete, great speed. And you combine that with his work ethic, I think he's much improved from where he was a year ago with us at Murray State.

Obviously for me, I'm hoping he'll transition very well to LSU because we're counting on him to do so.

Q. I know he was coming along, you had taken him along slowly, but Adam Miller, I know you had a secret game over the weekend. How did he do in that game,



and is he about where you thought he would be when you took over?

MATT McMAHON: Adam has been awesome. Only been with him seven months now. Relentless competitor. Very tough. I have great admiration for his work ethic and commitment and discipline to get back from the devastating knee injury he suffered about this time a year ago.

First inter-squad scrimmage this past weekend with officials. He's only been cleared for live play for about nine weeks now, but I think his progress has been off the charts. And I think that's a great credit to Shawn Eddy, our trainer, and medical staff, and even more importantly, Adam's commitment to do the work to get back.

But I'm really excited about him. An absolute joy to get to coach him. Incredibly smart, high basketball IQ. Really analyzes every aspect of the game.

So it's good for me as a coach because you have to make sure you know what you're talking about and you're prepared because he's going to have great questions every day. He wants to get better every day.

I think the next step for him, similar to what I just said about Justice, is taking a step forward as a leader of our team. I think he has great respect and credibility in our locker room because he is such a high-level player and because of his work ethic. And now for us as a team, we need some guys to step forward into that leadership role, and I think he's a great candidate there.

Q. Just a couple big-picture college basketball things, ideas that are out there now that the summer basketball idea that's gaining traction and then some folks buzzing about expanding the NCAA Tournament field. I wanted just your thoughts on both.

MATT McMAHON: I'm of the belief that the tournament is great the way it is. I don't see any reason we'd want to expand it.

As for the summer, I think it's a great idea. I know it was talked about a lot at our head coaches' meetings this summer in Destin. We'd be all for it. I think there's



certainly a TV window there late in the summer that's empty, and I think whatever we can do to generate more excitement around college basketball would be better for us.

We already have access to our players for eight weeks in the summer. It ends up becoming a long year. I think to face outside competition toward the end of the summer, have that televised, what that ends up looking like, I don't know, but I think it would be something we need to really explore and take advantage of that opportunity.

Q. You're one of six new coaches in the league. There's usually turnover every year, but that's a lot of turnover. What do you think that says about the SEC? You're kind of one of the young up-and-coming guys coming in. What do you think about this class of coaches?

MATT McMAHON: Well, there are some outstanding coaches coming into the league. I think one of the reasons you see the SEC now is easily one of the top one or two conferences in the country is because of the coaches already established here in the league. You have multiple Hall of Fame coaches. When you look at the last three years in the NBA Draft, the SEC has had 12 more picks than any other league, twice as many lottery picks as any other league.

I think you see the rise of the SEC as a basketball league. Obviously for me that was very appealing. As a competitor, you want the opportunity to go and compete against the best every night, and you're certainly going to get that opportunity here in the SEC.

Q. What should people expect from your team this year, your style of play? Can you describe that for people who have never seen you coach?

MATT McMAHON: That's a great question, and still a lot of unknown there. We have essentially 13 new players. We're trying to take these talented players and build them into one cohesive unit.

I think we have to work extremely hard and very intentionally to try and build that chemistry and that culture that will lead to, what we hope, a standard, a performance that will lead to winning.

For us, I think we have to -- first and foremost, I hope you'll see a product on the floor that we compete every possession, play extremely hard and with great unselfishness.

And when you look at some of the better teams I've been

fortunate to be a part of, there's a balance there. A balanced offense and defense. I think last year we were 12th in the country in defense, 13th in offense. I think to play at the pace we want to play, we want to be an up-tempo team, first and foremost you have to defend and rebound or you don't get the opportunity to play in transition.

We'll be a work in progress; that's for sure. But I like the steps our team is taking. Ultimately we want to put a product out on the floor that the LSU fans and students and alumni will be proud of and want to support because of how hard we play, how tough we are, how together we are, and ultimately hopefully lead to winning.

Q. How proud are the folks back in Oak Ridge? Have you had a chance to catch up with them lately?

MATT McMAHON: It's been awesome. The reception that we received in Baton Rouge, my family and I, has been just off the charts; but then to hear from so many family and friends back home in Oak Ridge and from the people at Oak Ridge High School, to a lot of the people I grew up with, has been really special to get to reconnect with some of them.

My family and I, we've had a good time sending out a lot of purple and gold gear back to east Tennessee to get everyone outfitted in their LSU gear.

Q. You're one of the new guys. There are a bunch of new guys. It's funny, basketball has kind of flipped in about five years. We had a lot of older coaches and a lot of younger players, and now we've got a bunch of fifth-year graduate guys and senior transfers, and we've got a lot of new younger coaches. Do you think this is going to be good for the game in the long term?

MATT McMAHON: That's a great question. I think when you look at the game in general right now, college basketball, you have the biggest changes in the history of the sport all happening here at once, with NIL, with the one-time transfer exception, with conference realignment, with these bonus COVID years. I think we're kind of figuring this out as we go.

But for us, we want to continue to build this hybrid model of a team. I think at LSU you can recruit the best players in the country out of high school. We also want to balance that through the use of the portal as we did this spring to be older and experienced.

I think for us, that's the goal, is how do we find the best pathway forward in this changing landscape of college basketball to build a championship-level program. That's



the different avenues we're going to have to take to get there.

Q. Coach, as much as the game has changed over the years, are there certain fundamentals that you point to and say, if we do these two or three things well, this leads to winning basketball, fundamentals, or something like that?

MATT McMAHON: Oh, I think so. The game and everything that goes into recruiting, sure, some of that is changing. But at the end of the day the product on the floor is still the same. Defense and rebounding, being an efficient, offensive team that generates high-quality shots, limits their turnovers, I think that'll always be the case in basketball.

We're working every day to build a fundamentally sound team at both ends of the floor that will give us an opportunity to win games.

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