

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TippOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Kristy Curry

Press Conference



Q. With regard to this team, what was your scheduling philosophy?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, definitely we feel like we have an experienced team returning, so we go seven out of the first ten on the road. As you can see, that's going to be a challenge for us, but I think it'll prepare us for January. We've really worked hard on our schedule to put us in a position at the end of the year from an NCAA Tournament standpoint.

Yeah, we're going to see real quick exactly what this team is made of from a toughness standpoint. It was put in place for a reason, so we're eager for it.

Q. With those five starters returning, is that the reason why you wanted to have a schedule that's demanding, or could a younger team have handled this kind of schedule?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I would hope that any team could handle it. I think that's the reality of playing in the SEC come January and February. Obviously, though, it definitely went into play with who we felt like was returning. We do return 95 percent of our scoring. We've added six new faces. Nine of our 13 started Division I basketball last year.

So it is an experienced roster, but it's a roster that's going to take some time to blend together and mesh together, learn each other's strengths and weaknesses.

So I think a challenging schedule, if handled correctly, can really impact March for us in a positive way, and that's our goal: March.

Q. With the experience coming back for this year's team, does that raise the level of expectations for what this team can achieve this season?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I think we all have high expectations each and every year, but there's no question I feel like our returning core made a commitment to come back to Alabama. We won eight of our last 10, ended up having a 20-win season, made it to the quarterfinals of the NIT. And I think this team is hungry, and that's the momentum that carried us into the summer.

So our leadership group, our core that's returning, and then we add some experience with the new faces, a talented roster. The expectations are high, and I don't think anyone could expect more than we do of ourselves.

Q. When you bring in five transfers, how has the transfer portal not only shaped the landscape of college basketball but how you approach building a roster in the off-season?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, it's definitely changed the landscape. In a lot of ways I think that it's definitely a piece of what we look at in recruiting as far as how our roster is made up, what our needs are.

I think we lost 78 percent of our scoring a year ago, so what last year's team accomplished, winning 20 games and having some of the big wins that they had, and now I think that group decided that they love being at Alabama, they take a lot of pride on the front of their chest.

So we feel like that's the best place in the country, so then they come back and they do a heck of a job in recruiting, come win with us, and we're excited about just the blend.

But this is my 24th year as a head coach, and you have to understand how the game is evolving. I think that we are allowing that to work for us and not against us. We're really working hard to recruit our roster at home and then keep our eyes open on the recruiting trail in all areas.

We did, we brought in a really talented freshman, Miss Tennessee Basketball, we added some new faces from the transfer portal with the returning roster and feel like we have added depth and versatility at every position.

Q. Not only do you return a lot of scoring from last year, you return a good chunk of your leadership. How



has their leadership kind of affected not only the transfers but the one freshman that you do have on the team, and how do they gel together on and off the court so far this season?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, they do a great job. Always say association brings on assimilation, and man, you look at the four in Jada, Meg, Hannah and Brittany, are all four working on their master's. They're an amazing example in the classroom and in the community.

Then you look at what they're doing on the floor. It's just their work ethic. All have different strengths and weaknesses, from being action to vocal leaders, and they're a fun group to be around. Again, I just think it's huge when you can return experience in all areas of your program, not just on the court but the classroom and the community, like that group does. It's amazing to watch because they truly are great examples and role models. This team really has seemed to embrace each other, and we're excited about it.

Q. Can you just speak a little bit more to the character of the team and who this group is off the court?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, you know, we have three core values. When you talked about culture, character, it's grit, love and gratitude. They are one of the grittest, hardworking group of kids I've been around. I just mentioned the classroom; it's the same way in the community and giving back. We spend a lot of time. They love each other. They love the front of their chest. They love the challenge I think this year presents to them.

Just with a grateful heart.

So when you talk about character, I think those three core values really emulate who this team is trying to be every day.

We've spent a lot of time away from the court. I think it's a lot bigger than 94 feet, from taking a team retreat to meeting different ones for coffee to having a meal together. We went for pedicures a week ago. We're reading books right now. We're doing a book club. We're currently doing so many things that have nothing to do with the game.

I think we're in a time and place in our sport, they don't really care how much I want. They want to know how much I care, and they want to understand one another.

The quicker this team can understand one another, the better we will be, and I think that will impact 94 feet.

Q. Saw the preseason rankings came out this

morning; what was your reaction to seeing Alabama picked 10th.

KRISTY CURRY: I don't really ever pay attention to anything in the preseason. I appreciate you guys, but at the end of the day we control our energy and effort. Let's see where we finish, and we can see if we think that's real.

But I'm in my practice every day. I'm around this team every day. I understand what we've done in the recruiting process.

So, respect, but certainly don't take that serious.

What we do at the end of the year and how we finish is what's going to matter most, not what anybody else thinks of what's going on in our program.

Q. I want to ask you kind of a broad question about the growth of women's sports. How do you feel that NIL is going to create more equity with sports, and maybe even help the branding of women's sports as a whole if you believe that?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, it's been amazing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title IX. This is my 34th year in the game. I grew up with a mom who was my high school coach. I grew up in the gym and on the softball field in small town in north Louisiana. To see where we have gone just in my time and know where we can go, I think we've only scratched the surface.

The support for women in sport has grown. Again, we still have work to do, but I'm so proud to be a small part of that and how it has impacted our ability as leaders, as moms, whatever our chosen field of endeavor might be.

But the NIL piece of it, I'm so happy that our players have the opportunity to have NIL. It definitely really helps from a financial standpoint that can impact them and their families while they're in school, and I think that it can only help impact women's sports in a positive way.

Q. Can you talk about the importance of welcoming those new faces? Seems like the team has put a lot of effort into that. And the specific ways that you think that's going to translate on the court.

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, you know, I think the new faces, it's always -- it's here, y'all. It's going to be a part. We're always going to all have new faces.

I think with the portal, with the landscape in recruiting, it's going to be something each and every year that we're all trying to blend our rosters and bring them together and

how quickly can we get them on the same page.

As much as we can do on the floor as well as off the floor to build the toughness, the character, the continuity, the cohesion, consistency I think is really going to be important.

We've taken an approach. We have always done a lot of things together, but I think now the quicker and the faster that we can blend and mesh and spend time together as a team, not just again on the floor but off the floor, it's going to make a big difference and impact our season.

Q. Coach, if you wouldn't mind, you have the transfers, can you say a little bit about each transfer?

KRISTY CURRY: Sure. I had somebody ask me earlier, who do you think is going to impact the most? Honestly, I think that's yet to be determined because I feel like that all can impact our roster.

I think a year ago our depth really lacked. We had three games where we had COVID issues, didn't have a starter in January, probably wouldn't have gone 0-3, so the depth is such a big important piece in this league.

I think the first one is Aaliyah Nye. Started at Illinois. I think hit 69 threes on the year. She can really shoot the basketball. She has some experience, again, as a starter in the Big Ten.

Sarah Ashlee Barker started every game at Georgia a year ago. We're so happy she's back home. I'm excited to be in Birmingham today in her hometown. She's just a special kid. She's a competitor. She's tough. Brings a hard-nosed, old-school mentality to the defensive side of the ball.

Loyal McQueen came to us last December, sat out, started 21 games at Georgia Tech, brings a lot of energy, gives us a presence at the rim, which I thought we lacked at times in our backcourt last season, and finishing, she's a lefty, she's crafty, brings a lot.

Ryan Cobbins started every game a year ago at North Dakota State, averaged double figures a game, strong, physical forward.

Jeanna Cunningham, a 6'5" post out of West Virginia that played, came out the bench for West Virginia a year ago, hard-nosed, ton of potential, has only scratched the surface on how good she can be.

And then our freshman, Karly Weathers, Miss Tennessee Basketball, has an IQ like no freshman I've coached in a

long, long time. Really can shoot the basketball. Will continue to grow and get stronger.

So practices are really competitive. If you asked me today who my starting lineup was or is, it's interesting because I think we have a lot of different lineups based off who our opponent might be that we would start.

I feel like we really like our depth, and practices are competitive. Injuries play a part, so it's really going to be important that we stay as healthy as we possibly can.

Q. Just talking about local recruits, I'm curious as a head coach how important truly is that, and do you emphasize that in recruiting to try to get athletes that they can bring that home fan base when they play on the court?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I think it's always important for each and every one of us in our home state to have that presence in recruiting. Yesterday was the first day of official practice in the great state of Alabama, and excited to send a lot of texts out and to post that from our account and wish so many high school coaches in this state a great first day.

When you look at our roster, to have Hannah Barber from Homewood and Sarah Ashlee Barker from Spain Park right here in Birmingham, it's important. We're always going to work really, really hard to keep our kids at home in state, and then we're going to branch out around.

I think that to be really good in this league, you have to recruit from a national standpoint and certainly a regional standpoint, so we feel good about how we're built our roster with that. But our philosophy is always to keep everybody at home in Alabama.

Q. You mentioned earlier that you guys are doing a lot of outside of practice stuff. I just wanted to get a little bit more information about the book club and the book you guys are reading and how you went about choosing that book and how that kind of helps build team around team togetherness.

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, spending a lot of time on leadership, in different areas that we're faced with in our world today, and how we can all be better, how we can love each other, how we can support each other. It's something that it's been interesting to watch our team really embrace.

I think our first book was "You Are the Team." Then we read "The Energy Bus." We're currently working with "Win in the Dark." I think Joshua Medcalf, he does a really good

job. I like his books. That's the one we're on right now.

And what we try to do is let a different staffer, a different player pick the book. I kind of started with "You Are the Team" at our fall retreat that we took, and Coach Janese is working currently on "Win in the Dark."

And Hannah Barber actually has the next book. She hasn't revealed to me -- I keep asking her what book because she loves to read. Spend a lot of time once a week on discussing certain chapters.

Q. You're returning 95 percent of the scoring with a lot of newcomers. Is it a challenge to handle so much depth?

KRISTY CURRY: I don't think it's been a challenge. It's just made practices really competitive.

The thing about competition, it only, as we say, helps each tide rise. We're about rising tides together.

We have our practice guys, too, so we've tried to be really smart, as well. 30 of 40 days from our first play-in date, it gets challenging, and it at times can be a grind. So we try to make sure we find that happy medium with being in shape and being ready to go come November 7 but also not wearing them down.

The kids have done a really good job of competing. We've changed up our lineups. We had a scrimmage against Louisiana Tech this past Saturday, so that was a great opportunity to see a different jersey, have different lineups, and excited about what we saw.

Certainly a lot of things we can improve on; that's what this time of year is about.

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