

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Florida Gators

Kelly Rae Finley

Women's Media Day Press Conference

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Welcome. Thank you guys all for being here today. What an exciting day and the kickoff to the start of the season. Let's have at it.

Q. Coach, what do you expect from your team this year? You brought in a lot of newcomers. How are you going to mesh those veterans with the newcomers?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Great question. We have been working tirelessly on building our chemistry, on connecting on and off the court, and on doing just that, meshing together, so that we can put a great product on the floor.

I think I'm most looking forward to how we're going to grow over the course of the season amidst each challenge that comes our way, game by game. And I do, I expect a lot of growth from this team this season.

Q. What's it mean to build a strong program in the state of Florida, considering all the talent that's in the state?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Great question. I think that girls' basketball as a whole is thriving in the state of Florida. Something that we've done this year, if you look at our schedule, we will compete against Miami, we'll compete against Florida State, and we'll compete against FAMU.

I think that's great for girls' basketball. I think it's exciting and energizing and will help us to continue to build moving forward.

Q. This team and this program in general feels like it's on the precipice of something really exciting. Can you talk more about that and getting to be at the helm as a young coach for a program that has a lot of potential and historical potential for the school.



KELLY RAE FINLEY: Yeah, I think we do have a lot of potential, and our focus right now is on growing, cultivating relationships and trying to build this the right way.

With everything that we do, we want to focus on intention and the choices that we're making that come behind all the feelings that we have. We as humans have feelings, and then behind that you have a choice.

When we narrow our focus, I firmly believe that we're going to be able to continue to build and grow as a program.

Q. How did you grow last year both as a coach and as an individual?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: In a lot of ways. In a lot of ways. I think that much was the same, but very much was different. I think that our focus and my focus as a whole was on creating a great experience and on loving and caring for one another and challenging each other and lifting each other up.

That will be no different this season as we embark on a whole 'nother year with a very different roster than we had last year, and I'm excited to see the growth and the opportunity that's ahead of us.

Q. Can you speak a little bit to the turnover that you had this past year, specifically losing Lavender Briggs and what's that mean for the future of your program and how do you rebuild?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: We were able to sign four tremendous transfers, and transfers are very much a part of our game in the landscape of women's basketball as a whole.

With the addition of Aliyah Matharu, Leilani Correa, Ra Shaya Kyle, and KK Deans, we feel like we were able to fill some potential gaps in our roster.

And when we look at recruiting, we very much look at team building. We don't want two players who can do exactly the same two things. We don't want two players who have exactly the same personality.

When you look at our team, you're going to see diversity in



every way, from where they're from to how they were raised to how they play to how they think to how they approach obstacles and things of that nature.

It's exciting to see how they're meshing together, and we'll all continue to see how they're going to continue to grow throughout the season.

Q. You just mentioned the idea of having the transfers that you just named. How does having a player like Nina impact that, as well, having a veteran player like her to kind of guide them along the way?

KELLY RAE FINLEY: Yeah, that's a very good thought, and I'm glad that you can touch on that.

Nina has been extremely steady for us since the moment she got on campus. She has a tremendous work ethic. She has a tremendous desire to help grow our program. In every and any way that she is asked, she excels, whether that's in the classroom -- she's currently pursuing a business degree, and at the University of Florida, that's quite the challenge.

She does so with class, with a smile on her face, and with a relentlessness that says we're going to do it, come with me, I believe in us.

So when you return veterans like that, you have the opportunity to build something very special.

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