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An Interview With:

TEXAS COACH GAIL GOESTENKORS

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by the Texas coach, Gail Goestenkors. If you would make an opening comment or two, we'll take questions.

COACH GOESTENKORS: I was thinking back to last year when I was here, and it was just a whirlwind for me. It feels good to have a year under my belt. And I feel so much better this year than I did a year ago. It was a whirlwind, my head was spinning. I didn't know what to expect.

And so now having been through it, I think for myself and my team, we just feel like we're so far ahead of where we were last year they understand what I want and need. I think I understand them as well a little better and know how to motivate them as individuals and as a team and I really understand the big 12 better. It was difficult last year preparing for 11 new teams, 11 new coaches, and I give my staff and my team a lot of credit, because it was tough for us.

But I think second round, when we got a chance to play some teams for the second time we felt a lot better, more confident and more comfortable. So we're looking forward to this year. We lost one senior. Earnesia Bailey. We brought on three freshmen that are all going to help us.

We're excited about this year. I think we're already ahead of where we were last year. I know we were ahead of where we were this time last year but I feel like we picked up where we left off at the end of last season.

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. You said what you picked up at the end of last year. Picked up not what you felt like after UCON, or did pick up a little bit of what you felt after UCON, which is ticked off? And the second part: How would you assess your post game going into the season?

COACH GOESTENKORS: I think we are picking up where we left off last year in that I think it really worked out very well for us. Getting into the NCAA tournament was really necessary and huge to have that experience for these young ladies.

Winning our first game against Minnesota was very beneficial. We felt so good. Okay, look how far we've come. That's how we felt. And then playing Connecticut getting trounced by Connecticut was actually, in retrospect, probably good for us because it also said, okay, now look how far we have to go. And it was a tough experience for us. We never want to feel that way again. So I think heading into the spring and the summer, it couldn't have worked out any better for me as a coach.

I think if we would have played Connecticut close, the players might have felt like, and the staff might have felt like, hey, we've arrived. We have not arrived. We have a long way to go. It's going to be a long and difficult journey, but heading into post season, to have their attention to understand how much harder we have to work to get to that point, I think, it was very beneficial.

As far as our post game, this year I think it will definitely be better. We have all of our post players returning, which we did not have depth in the post. That was a weakness for us last year. We still don't have great depth. We're going to rely a lot on Ashley Lindsey as we did last year.

But adding Ashley Gayle to the mix, she's another 6-4 post player that's bigger, stronger than Ashley Lindsey. She's also a shot-blocker. So she adds to our depth. I will play them at times together. And then we've got Earnie Williams who played in the post. She's undersized. But she understands what it takes now to play in the post.

I'm also bringing her out, letting her be a big post-up guard for us this year. I think we'll be more versatile.

And then Kristen Nash has improved over last season. That was her first season. She was red shirted the season before. So she knows more

what to expect this year and she's really improved.

Then I'm actually playing Kat Nash at the post position as well. We did that when necessary last year. It wasn't always pretty. But now I'm beginning the season with her, understanding she may play some minutes at the 4. So that's going to help us as well.

Q. You were one of the eight teams that went 8-0 in the first round last year. The league was considered by pretty much everyone to be the top league in the country. Everybody's got three or four starters back. Has the slate gotten better from last year?

COACH GOESTENKORS: Most definitely. That's what's scary. It's good. It's exciting. It's also scary for us coaches. We know night in night out it will be a war. I think every team is better in this league. I think it's going to be such an exciting year.

You look back, the rankings preseason, they mean absolutely nothing to any of us. If you just look back last year at the preseason rankings you can see why, because on any given night you just don't know what's going to happen.

So I think it's exciting for all of us as coaches and teams, because we know when we prepare for the Big 12 we're also preparing for the NCAA tournament. And there is not a style of play we will see in the NCAA tournament that we haven't already seen in our league.

Q. Talk a little more about Earnesia and what you'll expect out of her as kind of a change in duties this year.

COACH GOESTENKORS: I'm excited about Earnie. She does a tremendous job. She does whatever it takes. She's my warrior. She's somebody I know I can put in and she will compete at the very highest level day in day out. She's the one diving for those balls, taking charges, all those little things that make a big difference.

She's always wanted to play on the perimeter. She's been forced to play in the post just because of our numbers, and so this year I feel like I'm going to be able to allow her to play out on the perimeter a little bit.

We'll also go with a four-out motion which lets her come outside. She's going to be just a tremendous post-up guard. She's been working on her 3-point shot, her ball handling.

I'm real excited. She's healthy for the first time in a long time as well. She's been playing hurt really every year of her career. So it's really

nice. She looks -- she's in the best shape of her life. Very athletic. She looks really good right now.

Q. You talk about getting more comfortable with the Big 12 and styles of play. Is it, I guess is that something that the second time around were you already more comfortable or what's that been like as far as because you know when you're in the ACC so long you could probably tell what people are going to do in your sleep. So what's that process been like?

COACH GOESTENKORS: It was really difficult the first round. Because every game -- not only were we preparing for 11 new teams and coaching styles and players, but they were different styles of play. And the ACC we tended to play similar. Similar styles of play. Very athletic. Up and down. But it was very similar.

The styles in the Big 12 are so different depending on who you're playing. So it was a tremendous challenge. And then I really did feel much more comfortable coaching the second time around. I understood much better what teams were more likely to do, what their strengths were.

The coaching styles and who they would go to in crunch situations, all those little nuances that when you're in a league for a period of time and coaching against the same teams, I didn't have to do a scouting report on Carolina, Virginia, Maryland. I knew exactly what they were doing without breaking out a piece of paper or watching a tape. But it was much more difficult in the Big 12. So I'm really looking forward to, again, becoming more comfortable, but certainly the second round was much better for me and I think for my team as well.

Q. Talk about the return of Erika Arriaran and how that's going to affect how you play this year?

COACH GOESTENKORS: I'm so excited. We're all excited about Erika's return. She's healthy, in the best shape of her life. She looks great. She could always shoot. She can still shoot. And that really just changes the game for us in that it spreads the floor out and will open up driving lanes for Earnie for Brittainey other players. Also opens up Ashley Lindsey to go more one-on-one inside.

So we're excited to have Erika back. She's also one of the best passers I've seen. I

don't think she gets enough credit for her passing, and has a tremendous knowledge of the game. Knows where the ball needs to be in what situation. So she's a tremendous addition to the team.

Q. How is it going to help Carla play to her strength a little bit more? And also maybe when you need to sit her, you weren't able to do last year. Having Erika, how does that make Carla better?

COACH GOESTENKORS: Makes our entire team better. I'll tell you last year there was a lot of pressure on Carla because she was our only point guard. And we moved Brittainey to the point to help her a little bit. But really Carla was it for us.

And now it's amazing, because when we're running practice, we've got Carla at the point. Brittainey now feels comfortable at the point because she got that opportunity last year. Erika feels very comfortable because she played the point the year before.

And then my two incoming freshmen, Ashley Fontenette and Yvonne Anderson, both played the point as well. They're combo guards; play 1 and 2. Went from having one legitimate point guard, now we have five that feel comfortable in that situation, which gives me a level of comfort.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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