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Student-Athlete Round Table:

**OKLAHOMA STATE
TAYLOR HARDEMAN**

**KANSAS
SADE MORRIS**

**IOWA STATE
AMANDA NISLEIT**

**BAYLOR
JHASMIN PLAYER**

**MISSOURI
ALYSSA HOLLINS**

**TEXAS
EARNESIA WILLIAMS**

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Hello, everyone. I'm Brenda VanLengen. I'm an analyst on the Fox Sports Net Package for the Big 12 Conference.

To build on what we did last year, having a student-athlete roundtable to give you a chance to get to know the players on a little more personal level and have them get to answer questions in front of each other, which is always interesting.

But we'll start off by having each one of them introduce themselves, say what school you're with and what year you are in school. If you want to start, Taylor.

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: Taylor Hardeman from Oklahoma State. I'm a senior.

SADE MORRIS: Sade Morris from Kansas and I'm a junior.

AMANDA NISLEIT: Amanda Nisleit from Iowa State and I'm a senior.

JHASMIN PLAYER: Jhasmin Player, Baylor University, and I'm a senior.

ALYSSA HOLLINS: Alyssa Hollins from Missouri. I'm a senior.

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Earnesia Williams from Texas, and I'm a senior.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: They're all comfortable with a microphone in their hand. Let's start with Jhasmin Player.

Jhasmin Player is the person you haven't seen most recently. Of course, she had the ACL injury against Kansas State in the middle of last season, and, Jhasmin, you talked to me about the fact that that really was a blessing in disguise. Can you tell everybody what you discussed with me about that?

JHASMIN PLAYER: As I said to you before, a lot of people don't know how it is. Like I didn't -- I didn't know how it was for anyone who's ever been through it. I've heard and I have seen players go through it all my life because I've been playing ball, but until I went through it myself, I never knew what it was like.

At the time it happened it was at a time where I was playing the very best basketball of my career. So when it happened I thought I was done for, that there was nothing next for me. Had a great doctor and staff at my university.

I didn't think it could get any worse, but the only time it made a turn for the worst, my example was every summer we do something during our conditioning phases where we run stadiums, football stadiums outside in the heat of the day, Texas heat. We run football stadiums and we do it as a team. And so as a team when someone thinks you're going to faint, you have another teammate to build you up, tell you you can make it and do better.

Well, after my ACL surgery, I was in rehab alone. And I was going up there probably 5:30 in the morning, five days a week because I had an 8:00 class and I had to beat that. So just being outside in that Texas heat, doing those stadiums alone, to myself, was the toughest thing that I had ever had to go through because I didn't have that person in my ear motivating me to do better.

It was something I had to want for me to do myself. It was something that God was teaching me. You have to want this for yourself

before having to want it for someone else. It was a blessing in disguise. I got through it. I'm looking forward to a great season. I feel like after I've gone through that I'm as battle-tested as anything. For anyone who would go through it, I'd offer up anything they'd need because it's that tough.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Just to follow up on that, something I thought that you mentioned to me, all of you know, all of us know how tough the Big 12 Conference is and how you go at each other night in and night out. But after that happened, tell everybody what kind of support you got from other people in the Big 12 Conference.

JHASMIN PLAYER: That's one thing about the Big 12, you'll always remember its toughness. You'll remember the big games, when you upset teams on the road and you'll always remember that.

But personally one thing I'll never forget is I tore my ACL Feb. 2 at Kansas State. We actually ended up winning that game, but no one in the gym knew I had torn it. I knew it, Kansas State's team doctor knew it, and our trainer and Coach Mulkey hadn't even known it yet. But they had two or three kids on their team who had torn theirs.

So after the game they walked up to me, tears in their eyes. We were the two teams tied for the first in the league. Tears in their eyes, they told me how hurt they were it happened to me, how sorry they were that it happened to me.

And I was already crying because it had happened too, but just to know that they cared, it spoke volumes. I didn't think it could get any better than that. I rode my whole flight home and cried the whole hour and a half. And I got home and I do what college students do, I got on Facebook.

And I had probably at least two Facebook messages from every team in the Big 12, from a player on every team in the Big 12. And that's when I knew that it's greater than basketball. I've got cards from coaches -- like everyone just showed me some support and showed me that they cared and shared ACL stories.

We have coaches sharing knee replacement stories with me just to kind of make me feel better about my situation. And when that happened to me, Sydney Colson from Texas A&M tore hers this summer and the first thing I did for Sydney was send her the messages they sent me. Anyone from the Big 12, if you don't know that I received your messages and your support, I did. And I learned from it. And I really appreciated it.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Switch gears. I'm going to talk to Amanda Nisleit, and she has a

interesting story from high school that she was a finalist in the national Got Milk competition. Can you talk about how that happened?

AMANDA NISLEIT: Funny story. So I was sort of, like, interning/office aid for athletic director to see -- I didn't know if I wanted to go into teaching, but just to see what that all entailed. And one day I finished up what he had for me and he gave me this little sheet of paper and it was to fill out this essay about what our school would do with a thousand dollars and how we could make our school healthier.

So I wrote a rough essay, then a couple of weeks went by. I didn't think anything of it. I got an e-mail and the director was telling me that I'm a finalist. I'm like "okay."

So I guess I must have wrote that essay pretty well. But so I ended up winning. And then a player from the NBA of your choice -- I picked a couple and actually ended up being Fred Hoiberg who went to Iowa State, so it was neat. And he came to our school and we got milk moustache pictures with him so we got to drink the vanilla shake. A neat experience.

And he talked at our school about being healthy and how important milk is, and then our school ended up buying some equipment for the weight room. It was kind of a funny story.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: And Sade Morris and Taylor Hardeman were high school teammates. Interesting, they're sitting down there. Sade, tell everybody why you have your name.

SADE MORRIS: My dad actually decided to name me after the singer Sade because his favorite song is Smooth Operator.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: You can hear it in the voice, can't you? It fits.

You talked to me about the fact that the person that's had the biggest impact on your basketball career is your dad. So why has he and how has he made such an impact on you?

SADE MORRIS: Growing up I used to follow him around when he went to play intramural basketball. And since I was never old enough to play against people, I always would just go on the side court and take a ball and dribble it around.

Then as I got older I'd always play him in a game of horse or pig. And till about when I was a senior in high school I finally beat him in horse. He still doesn't like to admit it. But I won.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Congratulations. Do you have any good stories about Taylor from

high school?

SADE MORRIS: No.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Taylor, do you have any good stories on Sade?

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: No.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: None they're sharing. Well, Taylor, you and Shaunte' Smith are part of the class that as a freshman were 0-16 and two years later you're in the Sweet 16. Talk about that journey for the two of you.

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: Coming into the Big 12 and you don't win a game, it kind of makes you think, hmm, is this the place for me, is this where I need to be, is this right? And Shaunte' and I grew tremendously from that. That season I wouldn't take back for anything because I learned how to play, how to play hard and, yeah, maybe we didn't win.

We took some teams to the end of the game, but it just didn't work out in our favor. And I think that as a player, when you go through things like that, it makes you want to work harder and say I never want that experience again. I don't want to ever feel that again.

And getting to the Sweet 16 this year with Shaunte', we were both ecstatic. We work hard all summer, all year to get there, and finally when it was there it was just like a dream come true to us and we both looked at each other and we were just in tears because we never thought we would get that two years later. And we're just really blessed to have the coaching staff that we do and my fans, the fans that we have and the support from my teammates.

Because without bringing in new people, we wouldn't have got there.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Alyssa Hollins from Missouri also talked about, like Sade, the biggest impact on your career was -- you call him your daddy. So talk about your daddy.

ALYSSA HOLLINS: My dad was the first one to put a basketball in my hand about the third grade. I don't know. He always believed in me we used to play horse, but I think I got him in about the fourth grade I beat him at horse. He always tells me "I knew right then you would be a shooter." So I don't know.

And I think a big thing my dad did, he didn't play college ball, but he's a real student of the game. So as I got older and my game began to progress and he thought I was getting beyond what he could teach me, he made sure he put me around people best of my game. And without his

support and him getting the ball in the first place, I wouldn't be here.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Earni Williams from Texas has also experienced the ACL injuries that Jhasmin talked about. And through that experience you've learned a lot about your body and you actually have decided to be a personal trainer. So tell people what you've learned through this process and why you want to be a personal trainer.

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: I've been through -- like she said, I've been through a lot of injuries, two ACLs and two arthroscopic knee surgeries. You kind of learn your body. And just going through the experience, I just kind of kind of fell in love with learning about the body. It just seemed real interesting to me.

And I'd just like to help people get through their injuries.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Jhasmin, I know that you want to talk about your puppy. Jhasmin has a puppy named Austin. Right away when I asked her about it, she flipped out her iPhone and was showing me pictures. Tell everybody about your puppy.

JHASMIN PLAYER: That's embarrassing. I feel like the parent on the movie that brings out the long list of kids. I have a puppy, Austin. I got him -- he's a chocolate brown dog with curly hair, but they told me he was registered chihuahua. But he's two. I feel like a loser, but I really don't know how I would make it without him. He licks the sweat off my face and -- yes, you know, I always thought it was so nasty when I would see people in public letting their dogs lick all over them.

But I love him. I just love him. He's my weakness. You can lose by 20 and be 0-for-16 and eight turnovers you go home, he'll be there just clueless, licking you on your face.

I love him. He's spoiled to death. Doesn't even know his name because I call him Sweetie and Baby, anything but Austin. But outside this ball thing, he's the sparkle in my eye.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Now, that's something I bet you never knew, right? That's what this is all about. Amanda, you told me you love to do scrapbooking and it's not just the old-fashioned scrapbook cut out the articles out of the paper and put them in, but you really put a lot of work into it. So with the season you had last year, the ups and downs, tell us a little bit about the scrapping you did last year.

AMANDA NISLEIT: Every year since I've been here I've been doing a scrapbook. I save it to the end. We have about a week off Coach gives us after the season before we start post-season. So that's the time when I gather all the pictures. And I save a couple of the back scores of some big games we came back or ones we weren't expected to win.

But I just like to document the fun memories because I never want to forget them. And there was a snowstorm when we were leaving from Kansas and Coach Fennelly and two of our managers had to push the bus, so all I could see was Coach Fennelly pushing the bus from behind from the window from the snowbank.

Just fun memories from different places we've been, the fun trips we've taken and memories we've taken on the bus trips along the way with my teammates.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Sade, one of the questions I asked all of you, you're all media savvy. You get asked a lot of questions all the time by the media. But what's a question that you don't get asked that you wish you would? And your response was: What do you do to build such great team chemistry with your team? So what's the answer to that?

SADE MORRIS: Well, every week we all get together and either go to a teammate's house, will either watch a movie or play games. And then at least every day we all eat together at training table and we all sit and talk and have fun.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: That's a big part of it. Thank you. And, Taylor, your older sister Sunny played for Oklahoma, of course, and now you're at Oklahoma State. The conversations around the dinner table have to be pretty interesting at your house.

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: Not really. My sister is very proud of me and what I've accomplished. And, yes, of course we have our battles here and there. But I've got her in a black shirt with some orange on it so I think that's an accomplishment in itself. My family is just happy for me and just knew that, just knew when I went to Oklahoma State that's where I was supposed to be. Just excited and blessed to be there.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: You talked about the impact your parents have, and the whole story we talked about with the 0-16 to Sweet 16. Talk about the impact that your parents have had.

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: My parents went through kind of with Sunny during OU's little shindig, whatever. My parents, they're always

there for me. And my freshman year I would sit there and cry on the phone to my mom and dad, just cry and they were just there. And my sisters were there. And they just lifted me up and said it's going to be okay, you're going to be okay.

That's something that made -- made my family stronger because when those things happened to your kids, you don't want to see your kids cry.

And whenever I have hard times I just look to them and they build me up. So thanks Dad and Mom, love you.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Her dad is here getting this all on tape, right?

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: Of course.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: That's awesome. Alyssa, this summer I asked a little bit about what have you done this summer for workouts and getting ready for the season and what's different this year. You said you got a little ROTC action at Missouri.

ALYSSA HOLLINS: Yes, we had some of the military guys come out, put us through a brutal workout. I've been through a lot of workouts, but it was so hard. It was so intense, it was like seven, eight of us we were lifting logs over our heads, curling logs, running logs down the field and back, doing rifle pushups, everything. It was so intense.

It was one of those things -- they come and you have immediate respect for them and for what they do, because they talk about how if they fail it's death for them. It's really intense.

And you just can't go through something like that with your team and not come back, come out of it a little more together, believing in each other more, because it's one of those things where if anybody messed up everybody paid. I was impressed with the girls, I'm not going to lie. It's just a real good experience for us. I felt like it brought us together.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Earni, Coach Goestenkors, obviously an assistant coach on the Olympic team this summer, and you kind of took advantage of that situation, didn't you?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Yeah, and I gave her a whole bag of stuff to go over there and get signed from her team. I think everybody kind of brought boxes when they knew she was going over to Beijing. But she brought back a U.S.A. jersey signed by the team, and that's just really cool for me.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: And did you get

a chance with the team to watch any of the games on TV or were you able to stay in tune with what was happening over in Beijing?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Coach G was texting us back and forth about when the games were, and they were on so early you tried to break your sleep and get up. But I made some games, then fell asleep after the games.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Jhasmin, you have two Hall of Fame coaches on your bench with Leon Barmore joining the staff. How has that been? I know you've only had a few on-court practices, but what's it been like having both Kim Mulkey and Leon Barmore?

JHASMIN PLAYER: They're exactly alike. Coach Mulkey is the spitting image of Barmore, but it's like Alyssa said with -- but not that extreme. But when Coach Barmore walks in the gym and says a word, you have immediate respect of his knowledge of the game. You know he knows so much. He taught our head coach, and for us to have a practice and be taught by two legends of the game you have no choice but to try to soak as much in as you possibly can.

The first day he came to practice, he's a real quiet guy. The first word he said -- you can hear everyone. You could have heard a pin drop. Everyone wanted to hear what he had to say so badly. Coach Mulkey is at a point where she knows how to push our buttons, she does it all the time. But Coach Barmore hasn't started yet. When he does it, it's going to be tough.

But right now it's just a lot of learning and learning as much from him as you possibly can. You can see Coach Mulkey still trying to learn as much from him as she possibly can. It's a great learning experience. A blessing, because I don't know too many schools in the country that can say they have two Hall of Fame legend coaches coaching and so it's really a blessing.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: There are only two other schools in the country, Tennessee and Rutgers, that have two Hall of Famers.

Amanda, you want to be an elementary teacher, but some of those activities might interfere with practice time over the next few weeks. Can you tell everybody what's going to be happening with you?

AMANDA NISLEIT: Starting on next week, Monday and Wednesday I get to observe and teach a kindergarten class. So in the fall I'll be doing kindergarten and then in the spring I'll be doing fourth through sixth. And in the spring it will

be around tournament time, hopefully, postseason tournament.

And then so I talked to Coach Fennelly and I told him on the way here, it's like, by the way, I don't know -- I have to be at school from 8:15 to 3:45, but of course his first reaction was don't worry about it, school comes first. He's been good about being a student and then an athlete. We have some things worked out where I can come after and figure out what I've missed.

I'm really excited to get into the classroom. This is the first time I'm going to be in the classroom to observe the students and start teaching. I'm excited to get going with that.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Sade, your freshman, Angel Goodrich, highly touted freshman, just tore her ACL this weekend. I know that's fresh in everybody's mind. How is the team handling that right now?

SADE MORRIS: We all feel bad for her but we can't feel bad for ourselves. We've just got to get over the hump and we just have to have certain people step up. We have to improve our game. Yeah, she's going to be missed but I think we're experienced enough that we'll be able to move on without her. I know she's still going to be great for us in the coming years.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: And we just see it too often. There's just way too many and my heart goes out to all of you whenever that happens and your teammates and so forth, but the way you pull together is just very impressive.

Taylor, you didn't get a chance to talk about your other sister. You have a very basketball-minded family. And Lacey played at the college level. I know you have the OU/OSU thing, but talk about Lacey's impact.

TAYLOR HARDEMAN: My middle sister, Lacey, she is 18 months older than me. People get us confused. It's funny. The fans in the middle of the game think I'm in the bathroom: Oh, you're playing great, you're playing great. My sister looks at them like, what are you guys talking about? She's like, oh, you think I'm Taylor. So we'll probably get a shirt made that says, "Yes, I'm Taylor's sister" or "I'm not Taylor" or something.

But she played at Southeastern in Durant and she's a phenomenal woman. She keeps me strong and she's kind of my angel. She's my girly girl, teaches me how to dress and how I need to be, and she actually got engaged this summer. So we're working on that.

But just love her to death. And she also had a big impact on me. She's pushed me and we played together in high school. So it's awesome to play with your sister in high school. And she definitely helped me be the player I am today.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Alyssa, when I asked what's a question you never get asked that you really wish someone would ask, it's what have you learned from the players that have gone before you or that have graduated from Missouri.

ALYSSA HOLLINS: Something about being on a college team, coming in as a freshman you have a lot of older girls that take you under their wing. I learned a lot from LaToya Bond -- obviously she's in the WNBA now -- a lot about footwork in general. Christelle N'Garsanet was a senior my freshman year. She was so sweet to me. She taught me what it meant to a freshman, being nice and just being open to them.

Carlynn Savant, I don't know when she graduated, but she was just so positive. I can go down the list, and I'll do one more. EeTisha Riddle. I'll never forget the look in her face. She could turn on the defense and be so hungry, and I learned the intensity at which we need to be playing at and how intense it gets and where I need to be in order to be competitive and to win games. So I learned a lot from a lot of people since I've been at Mizzou.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Earni, you told me off the court you're just a big kid. You like to go out and -- tell some of the people what you like to do when you're not playing basketball.

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: When I'm not studying or playing basketball, I relax at home, watch a lot of NetFlix, don't really watch cable, bunch of movies and series. I'm a big kid. You might see me at Chuck E. Cheese by myself putting coins in the games and stuff.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Laser tag?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Yes, laser tag.

BRENDA VANLENGEN: Putt-putt, a little bit of everything. That's good.

You can see not only are all these young women tremendous athletes and great competitors on the basketball court, they're incredibly articulate, intelligent, smart, and we're so glad to have this opportunity to get to know you a little bit better. Thank you very much.

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