

October 21, 2009



An interview with:

KANSAS COACH BONNIE HENRICKSON

PETER IRWIN: We'd like to welcome Bonnie Henrickson from Kansas University.

Bonnie, if you'd make a couple of opening comments, and we'll take questions.

COACH HENRICKSON: Great to be here. We're excited to get started. Having a few days under our belt, we're excited about our group and the growth -- potential for our growth this year. But we're also excited about what should be a great year in the Big 12. The quality of talent, the quality of coaches that year in and year out is consistent. And we're thrilled to be a part of it.

We've got a lot of work to do to be successful, but I like where we are right now, and I really like my team.

PETER IRWIN: Okay. We'll take questions from the floor.

Q. It seems like after your postseason run last season in the WNIT, a lot's expected of your team now this season. How do you feel your team will respond to all that, now being one of the teams to beat maybe?

COACH HENRICKSON: Our players are prepared. They've worked hard to get to this point. Certainly, using last year's run at the end of the year to gain confidence and gain experience.

And the bar is high. It's higher. It should be high. Our players are excited about that challenge. Year in and year out, it's a great league.

That presents a steep challenge every year and will be no different this year. But no one has higher expectations than I do.

Our goal right now is pretty simple. Just try to get better every day. And we'll have that opportunity this afternoon.

If we can keep it that simple and grow as a group, we've got a chance, like many teams in this league do, to have a great year.

Q. Hi, Coach. Danielle McCray was obviously a huge part of your team last year. I don't know if anybody has bigger expectations placed on them than her this year as the player of the year preseason-wise. Just what is she going to mean to your team again? You've got her one more year. Just how much is this offense really going to kind of thrive and revolve around her?

COACH HENRICKSON: I think certainly it will be important for Danielle to get touches and get good looks and high percentage shots. Certainly, her responsibility to take high percentage shots. But she's a very, very unselfish player and trusts her teammates.

I think our point guard play will be different. I think that will be good for Danielle, as well as everyone else in our group as far as how I really believe they'll be able to play in transition.

I think we'll be able to get her more uncontested shots in transition and not run so many sets, which is what we did quite a bit last year.

And Sade Morris on the other wing makes Danielle a better player. Those two being able to play off each other and being Batman and Robin, so to speak, and two talented kids on the wing.

Danielle's teammates' play and our improved play, the point guard position will help her have a great year, and obviously the confidence she's gained from the end of last year and this summer. And recognizing that her game has grown, her attack mentality is as good as it's been. But she understands that the quality of her teammates really will enhance her play throughout the course of the year.

Q. Can you talk about how different practice is with all this experience you have.

COACH HENRICKSON: The experience and then sheer numbers. We have 15 right now.

So it's very, very competitive. For the first time really in Sade and Danielle's career, they guard each other a lot in practice. We haven't had that much.

We have some young, talented wings that can play with them and need to learn how to play with them and get on the floor with them. Their competitiveness, the number of opportunities they have has increased in practice.

There's great energy. There's great accountability. Really, when you go back to look at last year when we made the run, there was a lot of self-policing. When you have a team that holds each other accountable, first and foremost, themselves, and our seniors do and our leaders do, and they start to hold each other accountable and they start to demand more, even before I can say, hey, double back. That was terrible. Or take some ownership.

We did that at the end of the year and really believe with a few other things that was part of -- created the opportunity for us to be successful. We didn't get to that probably until February.

And we are at that right now to start. That has been, if you listen, if you just sit and listen to practice, that's going on right now.

Great teams hold each other accountable. The head coach -- it is my responsibility, but when your leaders look left and right and demand more from themselves and more from their teammates, it gives you a chance.

Q. Bonnie, building your program didn't happen overnight. What was your blueprint? What was your formula for getting to this point?

COACH HENRICKSON: Get great players. I'm a better coach with talent, I promise you.

Develop the players in the program. We've done that. I think with Sade and Danielle, the two kids that are here today, the growth from their freshman year. And then recruiting. Recruiting a better athlete, a better basketball player. And then putting all of that together.

And believe that those two -- doing those two things, we've positioned ourself to have a much, much better year in the league. And, again, which is the best women's basketball conference in the country by far.

Q. Good morning, Coach. About a year ago at this time, Angel blows her knee out.

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Could you just talk about what she's gone through in the past year to get to here now.

COACH HENRICKSON: It is. It's been a lot for her, emotionally and physically. I believe the emotional part has been more difficult and was more difficult for her than the physical part.

She was a rock star in her rehab. She's out of the brace. She was running, sprinting, everything a little bit ahead of time. Not grossly ahead of time. You know, we didn't want to rush her, realizing we had the rest of the year.

But emotionally just, Will I still be good? Am I going to get hurt again? All of those things that every player that's injured goes through.

The physical part, she was fantastic. Our trainer, training staff did a great job. She did a great job committing to that. She's really relied on her teammates to be there for her.

She would tell you, if you had a chance to talk to her and when you do, that has made a difference for her. The support from her family, her coaches, and her teammates to reassure her, you do what you're supposed to do and do what the doctors and trainers tell you to do, you're going to be fine.

Yesterday she was as aggressive as we've seen her, since we didn't get to watch her very much last year because it happened so quick. As aggressive and as confident as she has played -- because late night on Friday night, a little passive, not very aggressive, didn't attack very much.

But every practice since then, she's been the Angel that all of us saw over in Tahlequah.

Q. Hi, Coach. I looked at media day, and Krysten Boogaard is a lot bigger. A lot of times last year, maybe she was being pushed around a little bit. She started pushing around other people in practice?

COACH HENRICKSON: She has. Actually, she tried to push me yesterday when I tried to play dummy defense. Why I thought I would play dummy defense. I was really good at it in college, but probably not something I should be doing with her.

I said to her, I wouldn't have felt like that; she kind of backed into me as I was trying to show weak-side help. She's put on 16 pounds.

It's good. She's running well. She's physical. She's attacking. She's playing with more confidence. Her personality -- she's much more confident as a person. She's done a great job.

B. Henrickson - 10.21.09

She's bought in to that will be a difference -- it really will make a difference for her. Because she did. She is maybe a step slower, maybe, but, boy, when she gets there, it looks good. I told her, Maybe you're there a second later, but now you can finish and do something.

Last year you got there faster, and everybody just shoved you around. That's a credit to her. She made a commitment, as did all of our players, they were in summer school both sessions and trained all summer together, every single one.

And the new players, the two junior college kids and the freshman. We had them on campus all summer. She made the most of her time in Lawrence over the summer because she's gotten bigger and stronger.

Q. Speak to the different style that you might play this year because of more experience and whether or not things might change because of the players you're going to be able to put on the floor this year.

COACH HENRICKSON: I think what changes our -- what will look different in reference to style will be our point guard play.

Two kids, Angel Goodrich and Rhea Codio. She's a junior college transfer from Manhattan College, by way of Manhattan, New York. Both are play making point guards. For us to create more opportunities in transition, to score more in transition, and not rely and put so much pressure on our half-court execution.

And in transition, getting uncontested shots. And Krysten should get more uncontested shots. All of the post players should as our point guards drive and drop, drive and kick, or go to the rim and finish. And both kids are small of stature but can find a way to score in the point and get underneath the big kids and score. Both did that successfully yesterday.

As far as style, we will still -- you know, as far as our player development, how we run offense, we really set up things to get our kids in a position to score and find out where they're most successful.

But I think where it will look different in style will be our effectiveness in transition, just being more opportunistic and being more aggressive.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you very much. And best of luck to you and your team this season.