

**October 21, 2009**



An interview with:

## **MISSOURI COACH CINDY STEIN**

PETER IRWIN: Okay. As we go back to the stage area, Coach Cindy Stein from Missouri has joined us. Coach, your thoughts about the upcoming season and any other comments you might have.

COACH STEIN: Well, I could take it out of Coach Mulkey's book and say "none," but it gets a little tough when she's voted number one and doesn't say anything. I'm not sure I should say anything at all.

But I'm extremely excited. I think that you see all the coaches in our league extremely excited about the year. I think we have great reason to be. And us for sure, we feel like we have something to prove.

We have great players that are working hard. We believe in what they're doing. And people want to know why we think we're going to have a successful year. I think the biggest ingredients are we have the will to win. We have the work ethic to win. And our hearts are bigger than they've ever been. And especially very united.

So we are going to prove everybody wrong.

PETER IRWIN: That sounds good. We'll start with that. Questions for Coach?

**Q. You talked about proving everybody wrong. How do you change the mentality from being a team that's picked 12th in the preseason to a team that really believes that it can win.**

COACH STEIN: Honestly, we were very surprised where we were picked because we expected more. So, obviously, we did take that as an extreme insult.

But at the same time, we also understand that we've got to do something about it. And how do you change that? Well, your players change that. And our players have already done that. That started as soon as our season was over last year.

Our team came together at that point and made an emphasis on making their own changes. Each of them individually and then obviously all of us collectively.

And that's how you do it. And like I said, we always had an understanding of what it took. I can't say our will was always there or our work ethic was always there, and our hearts were sometimes there.

I thought last year we learned a lot and we were constantly learning. I think that we've gone to a group like that to where now we're just playing. They know what to do.

The only people we've got to teach anything is to the two freshmen. And beyond that, we're just enhancing the things they already know.

**Q. Jessra talked a little about the hard time she got for Jessra's Jungle and everything, but how much is she going to really mean to this team? Obviously, she's gotten the crowd into it a little bit.**

COACH STEIN: Sure. Jessra brings a lot to our team, just on and off the court. She's hilarious. I think you probably picked that up. But she's also very talented.

Last couple of years she's been our second leading scorer. She's been our leading rebounder. She's led our team in blocked shots. She's a huge impact. She's very tough to defend. She's very versatile. She's improved her game.

I think that those things lead her to, you know, have a lot of confidence in what she's capable of doing.

But I would also tell you, I don't think that you can take away from Shakara Jones because that's someone that's started since her freshman year and just gets better and better. And RaeShara Brown, who led the Big 12 in steals this

year as a sophomore. I think that's a pretty tough thing to do.

I thought we were pretty good defensively last year, and we're much better now. I think that all of those things complement each other in making this a really good year.

**Q. Wonder if you could sort of expand on that. I thought a lot of your players by the end of last year, including Christine, you could really see the improvement coming. Is that carried over with some of your younger players, too, this season?**

COACH STEIN: Absolutely. This group -- and I've talked about this a little bit on -- usually you pick captains to help lead your team in the right direction. We're in a position where we can't pick captains because they're all doing what they're supposed to be doing.

It doesn't mean you have too many chefs in the kitchen; it just means that you've got kids that every single one of them are especially stepping up in their own way. They know how to talk to each other. They know how to motivate one another. Basically, we've got to pick captains for obviously the games, but they actually don't want captains because they want all of them involved in the entire process. And I think that's one of the greatest things about this group is they're so committed to each other.

**Q. Coach, you talked about defying expectations. How difficult is it to break into that upper echelon of the Big 12?**

COACH STEIN: Well, you know, obviously, our conference is extremely strong, and when you talk about that top echelon, you're talking about the top 1 percent in the country.

I think that's always tough. But I don't think it's undoable. I think the key in our league is who's going to play the best the most consistent throughout the year, preseason -- or preconference to conference. And let the chips fall where they may.

And I think that, especially this year, I see a lot of movement throughout the league on everybody. And Kansas being one of them. Nebraska being another one. I think that you just have some tough teams that, you know, I'm not sure that you can just say we have a top echelon.

PETER IRWIN: Somebody always asks about your freshmen. Tell us about your freshmen.

COACH STEIN: We have two freshmen. One of them is from Kansas City. Trenee

Thornton, point guard. Very talented player. Very good shooter, defender. Just still learning some things, but going to be a very good player for us down the road.

And then we had Sydney Crafton, a player out of Jeff City, high school out of Missouri. And, another, she doesn't even know what she's doing right now, and she's scoring. You know, she's getting deflections and doing a lot of little things, and she has no idea where she even is on the floor. She's going to be an incredible talent for us.

**Q. What about Bekah? I know she was somebody you, you know, were really high on and then got injured, was able to come back. How much do you think she's going to be improved this year?**

COACH STEIN: Well, Bekah's been out of practice a little bit. She has reinjured her knee. We're still waiting word on what that means. But, you know, Bekah's always so steady for us.

With that being said, I would say Toy Richbow, I think, is going to surprise everybody because she's always been a great defender. We can't stop her right now offensively. She's pushing the ball off the floor and just taking it to the basket. She's improved on her three-point shooting, where she's shooting close to 65 percent in practice.

And those are some of the things that, you know -- we've always liked the scoring point guard. I think with Bekah's presence, she's made Toy a lot better, and I think obviously that combination of the two are incredible.

**Q. I probably should have asked this before, but what's Bekah's situation right now?**

COACH STEIN: Right now she's seeing a doctor tonight. So I won't know until she sees the doctor tonight.

**Q. Did she suffer a serious injury in practice?**

COACH STEIN: She did reinjure her knee, so we're just waiting to see what happens.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, they let you off easy. Best of luck to you.

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C. Stein - 10.21.09