

October 21, 2009



STUDENT-ATHLETE ROUNDTABLE SESSION ONE

**SYDNEY COLSON
ALISON LACEY
DANIELLE MCCRAY
KELSEY GRIFFIN
JORDAN MURPHREE
WHITNEY HAND**

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Good morning. My name is Debbie Antonelli. I'm one of the analysts for Fox Sports Net on the Big 12 women's package. I'm here to moderate the session today. Ladies, let's please -- starting with Sydney, please state your name, school, year, and what your major is.

SYDNEY COLSON: Hi. I'm Sydney Colson. I'm from Texas A&M. I am a junior, and I'm a sociology major.

ALISON LACEY: I'm Alison Lacey. I'm a senior at Iowa State University. And my major is communications.

DANIELLE MCCRAY: I'm Danielle McCray. I'm a senior at Kansas. And my major is communications.

KELSEY GRIFFIN: Hi, I'm Kelsey Griffin. I'm a senior at Nebraska. And my major is biology.

JORDAN MURPHREE: Hi, I'm Jordan Murphree. I'm a senior at Texas Tech. And my major is exercise sports studies.

WHITNEY HAND: Hi, I'm Whitney Hand. I'm a sophomore at Oklahoma, and my major is physical therapy.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Ladies, our effort here today is to try to introduce you to these young women, their personalities, and why they've

become such great ambassadors for the Big 12. That's what we're going to attempt to do. Hopefully, this will be of interest to you. I know I'm very interested. I've had a good time researching them and finding out something for them as I'm preparing for my Big 12 season just like you guys are.

I want to start with Jordan. Jordan, one of the things that you do to volunteer your time is in the Challenger League. Explain the Challenger League, what it is, and what you benefit from.

JORDAN MURPHREE: The Challenger League is on Monday nights in Lubbock, and it's for the special needs children, and it's just kids who don't have the ability to play in the little league.

What our job is is you pick a buddy and stay with that buddy throughout the season. You just help them hit. If they're not allowed to hit, you run the bases with them, and everyone scores a home run.

If you have a bad day conditioning, practice-wise, you just think about that and how excited those little kids are to be out there day in and day out.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Sydney, you are in a sister-to-sister group. Explain what that is and why you're involved in that.

SYDNEY COLSON: Mostly, it's a group -- we have meetings like every -- like two times a month at our study hall facility at night. It's just for African-American female athletes to come together and talk about, you know, things that are going on in the community and things that are going on with our teams and what problems we're having or things that are going well.

And, you know, it's a way for us to get involved with the community and find out what's going on with one another.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Whitney, your skydiving experience this past spring, why? What possessed you to jump out of a plane? What did you gain from that experience? How did that make you a better basketball player or person?

WHITNEY HAND: Well, it was kind of a

spur of the moment kind of thing. A bunch of us when we first got here, our whole freshman class, the football guys and me and some of the basketball girls, we were like, we should go skydiving. We researched it for one of my friend's birthdays. Ended up being April, and our seasons were over. Let's do it. It was the coolest thing ever. I can't really explain it.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: You have to explain it. I want to know what would make you want to jump out of a plane and what was Coach's reaction to it?

WHITNEY HAND: I don't know if she knows. We were in this little cargo plane with four people, and you're sitting there with your knees up to your face. And the guy that's going with you is just telling you these awful stories. They were sitting there, and they have these altitude bracelets. You go up to 10,000 feet, I think it was.

We reached like the clouds, and I was like oh, my gosh. I looked at my friend. This is crazy. It was 4,000, and we kept going and going and going. Couldn't see the ground anymore. And I was like this is insane.

The thing is once you're in the plane, you can't back out of it. It's not like, oh, I don't think so. They open the door. Three, two -- oh, my gosh.

They literally just jump, the guy's on your back, and they just throw you out.

I was looking, and I see the plane, and I see clouds. And I was like, oh, my gosh. You free-fall for 45 seconds, and just freezing cold wind. I don't know. I'm shaking thinking about it.

You're just praying the parachute opens. After the parachute opens, it's great.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Could anything be tougher or more surprising in conditioning now that you've experienced free-falling 45 seconds? Does that give you a -- what kind of sense of courage did that give you about entering into this season?

WHITNEY HAND: I mean, skydiving, it's just the thrill of doing something that is crazy and just insane. It's also cool to be able to do that for yourself, I think. Just that kind of thing really boosts your confidence about just your fears and your ambitions and stuff like that.

Yeah, I think, I mean, it's kind of like I conquered that, why not run this suicide? Just kidding.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Why not run them?

Danielle, you are on many different leadership committees and boards and executive committees and things at Kansas, student-athlete advisory committee. Even on one of the

chancellor's programs. There's a lot of expectations for Kansas this year. How have you used your experience in those leadership type of experiences to help you become a better leader for your team?

DANIELLE MCCRAY: Like you said, just being a better leader on the team. Those committees has just -- the student-athlete advisory committee, you just go out and voice your opinions on things that you want -- or things that you want to see changed in the university. So it just helps going back and hearing what we talk about at meetings and telling my teammates.

It's this big thing we're doing now. Every year you get points for every event you go to. Say you go to a volleyball game. You get points. Your team gets points.

So like we compete with other teams in our school. So like whoever wins gets a big trophy. It's just something that we do to just support other teams and voice your opinions about what you want changed and things you want to see changed in the athletic department.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: It's always about competing, isn't it? Doesn't matter what you're working at, no matter what.

Alison, you made a decision this summer to stay in Ames, coming off your league experience. Instead of going and training with the Australian National Team, you stayed. Why did you stay?

ALISON LACEY: I thought it was my duty as a senior. The only one with playing experience really, besides Denae, to help the freshman, help Chassidy Cole, sophomore transfer, to try to help them get ready for the season, to get them up with plays, and just how we do things around Iowa State.

We lost a lot of good players, and we needed the freshmen to be able to play. I thought it was my job to make sure they're ready.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Kelsey, we are so glad that you're back healthy and ready to go. We missed you last year. At least I did. I don't know how the coaches in the Big 12 feel about that.

You and your dad have a great relationship. He is a cancer survivor. How does he motivate you to be the best that you can be and work hard every day in practice?

KELSEY GRIFFIN: Actually, he was a great motivator my junior year when he was battling cancer, had a rib injury, and it really put

things in perspective. That's really, I would say, the most motivation, how he's most motivated me is in that. In the whole scheme of life, is that one turnover, is that one missed layup, is it really that important? I think it's motivated me to look at the larger picture in things.

I think that's helped me in my leadership ability and not focus just on me, but on the team and on the whole process. And really the process of what we're trying to do at Nebraska.

I really appreciate that, you know. He does have words of wisdom, but I think it was the whole experience and really putting things into perspective and how not to take things for granted really helped me get through that year and helped me to really grow, I would say.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Unfortunately, cancer has touched all of us in some way, and, Jordan, your mother is a breast cancer survivor. How has your relationship with your mother and how she has battled so hard helped you?

JORDAN MURPHREE: I definitely have to agree with what she said. Putting things in perspective. You get someone close to you that comes down with something as a disease, and you just have to go through things and be positive. You have to be positive to the battle that disease. Day in and day out, we have to be positive on the court and just think, you know, people have it worse off than we do.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: You do the Locks of Love. How does that make you feel when you have a chance to help some young person battling cancer?

JORDAN MURPHREE: Definitely. I wasn't able to be home with my mom and I wasn't able to help her or anything. I thought that giving my hair to somebody that also was doing that. I cut off 14 inches and gave it to Locks of Love.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: In my conversation with Coach Curry last week, one of the things she said on the first day of practice she was going to do is pass out this book. It's called "The Energy Bus." I highly recommend it. Coaches, it's very good. I'm not a reader, and it took me a very short time to read it.

What's your assignment with the bus book? What is -- what did you gather from that? What is the most important message that you received from reading that book?

JORDAN MURPHREE: My assignment's not due until Friday, so I kind of procrastinated. I'm a little bit in. It's about a guy that goes through a lot of adversity, and his relationships are all failing

at his job and at his home. It's about having a positive attitude day in and day out and working with your team and working in his job.

I think it's going to help us a lot because we have six new people coming in that are going to face a lot of adversity and just having a positive attitude.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: It's an excellent book about leadership. It's very good.

Danielle, we've got a skydiver over here, a deep-sea fishermen over here. You go deep-sea fishing with your dad. To me, that's just as scary an experience as skydiving. Why? Where? What possessed you to do that?

DANIELLE MCCRAY: I did it -- I'm from Florida, so I always do it all the time. Growing up in a family where my mom was a commercial fisherman with her dad, and she stayed on boats for months and weeks and a long time.

My dad, he just has his boat, and we go out. I love fishing. So that's something I do on my off time. And when I go to Florida on vacation.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: You got any good fish stories? Tale of catching some gigantic --

DANIELLE MCCRAY: No, I don't have one.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: And you're going to be honest about, you're going to tell us the truth?

DANIELLE MCCRAY: One time, we have these belt things attached to your seat. And I got a big catch, and I almost flipped over in the boat. That's like the scariest thing that happened. I love fishing. When you love something, you do it all the time.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Kelsey, what did you learn from sitting out last year and not being able to play? You're on the end of the bench in street clothes the whole season. I know you listened to Coach Yori and benefited from hearing her from the bench and not hearing her from the court. What are some of the things you learned that you'll carry into this year?

KELSEY GRIFFIN: It was really another perspective year for me. I really saw the game more as a whole and not just as a position. Being a forward my whole life, basically. I really got to see more of how things work as a whole.

But also really the biggest lesson I learned was how much energy coaches put in to game planning. Knowing as a player, you have a lot going on. You have practice, and you get tired and those kinds of things. Having that all pushed

aside. Really seeing the energy that coaches put in to practices, to game plans, to encouraging, to cheering on in practice.

Like how much energy you exert clapping or encouraging, constantly motivating people. And really having that perspective now going into it, I think, has helped in my leadership ability and to be a mediator between coach and players to help in the process.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Sydney, you guys lost three valuable components to your team from last year, really good players that were history changing players in the Big 12. You're also on a student-athlete advisory committee. What will Coach Blair expect from you out of a leadership position because you're also the point guard?

SYDNEY COLSON: I think that he just expects for me, along with the other returners, you know, to help our freshmen out. It's been a tough transition for them thus far, you know, just, when we started with our 6:00 a.m. conditioning, they had never been through anything like that. Having to juggle both school and basketball, the time demands of our practices and everything else that we do, it's really tough for them.

Everybody on our team has been through that. We're trying to help them out as best as we can. Me, along with two other girls, on our team were on the student-athlete advisory committee. That helps with leadership skills. We just try our best to lead them in a positive direction.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Alison, you guys lost something also. Coming off your Elite Eight experience, what else did you gain in the NCAA tournament that you can carry forward this year?

ALISON LACEY: It makes you -- I'm hungry to get back there. That experience was great for our fans, for our university, and it was good for our seniors to end on that note. I want the freshmen this year to experience that because not a lot of people get to go through that.

If I can work hard and make them do the right thing, maybe we can get back there, and they can experience what we went through last year.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Whitney, the Final Four experience. I saw the myth about the Super Glue on your fingers. Can you clear that up for all of us? Start with the Final Four, and you can finish with the fingers.

WHITNEY HAND: I think -- I mean, every person dreams of going to a Final Four and getting to play on the court and going through that experience. As a freshman, it was overwhelming and just amazing. More than I could ever ask for.

I think our team bringing back -- you know, there's eight of us that have been there, and I think it's so key to our season this year. I'm so excited about it because all of us -- we lost. We shouldn't have. We lost, and it was just horrible. Even though we were there, it was a tough loss.

I think that makes us all the more hungry to get back there.

The Super Glue, I think I have dry hands. I don't know. I would shoot, and it would just crack open, and it was so frustrating. The only way they could stay together was Super Glue. So I Super Glued them.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Super Glue your fingers. That's a new one. To use Coach Coale in the years Erin Higgins was on the team, I carried a tape measure everywhere I went. When I had the Oklahoma game, I knew Erin Higgins was going to shoot a three that was going to require a tape measure it was going to be so long, I needed tape. I'm going to carry Super Glue in case you need it.

Danielle, one of the nicest compliments any player can receive is to be picked Big 12 Preseason Player of the Year. That means your peers think you're going to have a great year. You had a wonderful USA Basketball experience.

Assess what you feel like your responsibility will be this year with your Kansas teammates and how Coach Henrickson has helped you along the way.

DANIELLE MCCRAY: I would say just being a leader. As far as -- I think it's a great honor to be named that and recognized. I'm fortunate to be on a team that has great players that are pushing me every day and great coaches.

I think as far as for me, I have to do the same thing I've been doing, being a great leader and being more confident in my teammates and myself as well.

The most important thing is last year I think I led by example, and this year I think I have to be a leader vocally, more vocal, and just bring everyone under my arms.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Ladies, thank you so much for your time, and wish you all the best of luck this season.

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