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STUDENT-ATHLETE ROUNDTABLE SESSION TWO

**MELISSA JONES
BRITTANY SPEARS
ANDREA RILEY
JESSRA JOHNSON
EARNESIA WILLIAMS
KARI KINCAID**

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Everybody, thank you for joining us for the afternoon session of the student roundtable. My name is Debbie Antonelli. I'm one of the analysts for Fox Sports Net on the Big 12 television package.

What we're going to do is an attempt here to try to draw out some stories and some off-the-court things about these young ladies to bring out their personality. Anything that I will ask them will be a lot easier than anything they're asked to do daily on the defensive end.

Let's start with Melissa. And just say your name, where you're from, what year you are, and what your degree is in.

MELISSA JONES: My name is Melissa Jones. I'm from Thornton, Colorado. And I'm majoring in speech communications.

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Earnesia Williams from Oklahoma. Texas. I graduated last year with an education degree, and I'm trying to get kinesiology for grad school.

ANDREA RILEY: I'm Andrea Riley, and I'm from Dallas, Texas. I'm a senior, and my major is physical education.

KARI KINCAID: I'm Kari Kincaid, and I'm from Andover, Kansas, from K-State. I'm a senior majoring in elementary education.

JESSRA JOHNSON: I'm Jessra Johnson from Fayette, Missouri, and my degree is in history.

BRITTANY SPEARS: I'm Brittany Spears from Pasadena, California, and my degree is in sociology.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Kari, we're going to start with you. You guys lost a lot last year in Shalee and Marlies. How will you expect to replace some of that this year?

KARI KINCAID: Definitely not going to replace them. You can't replace Marlies Gipson, Shalee Lehning and Danielle Zanotti. You definitely have to find new ways to fill the shoes and the numbers they put up for four years straight.

It's going to be something we're going to have to work on all season long. It's not going to be one person. It's going to be a collection of the whole team.

It's just going to take a lot of accountability from each person to understand what they brought to the game and what we lost last year. But it's something that we worked on from day one, and we're still working on it.

It's going to be a year long thing.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Ernie, you went through senior ceremony last year. Welcome back. We're happy to have you back another year. We're not all surprised, but we're happy you're back.

Why were you able to come back? What was the decision that came through your mind to play another year because you're a redshirt senior?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: All last year I knew I had another year. I played last year like it was going to be my last one.

I didn't make the decision until after the NCAA, the game, and, you know, I didn't want to leave Texas on that kind of a note, you know, getting out in the first NCAA round.

I knew we were going to have a good team with our freshmen coming in this year, and our sophomores have improved greatly. I just wanted to give it one more go.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Brittany, Coach McConnell-Miller and I were talking about a story

about you about the Coors Event Center, where you guys play your home basketball games, and your card allows to you get into the building at any time. You've become sort of an electrical engineer and can turn the lights on. You've had a hard time turning the lights off at night, so you're in there all hours of the night.

Do you think the electrical bill in the Coors Event Center has gone up because you spent so much time in there shooting? And what are you working on when you're in there?

BRITTANY SPEARS: It probably has gone up, but that's not my problem. I was working on shooting and ball handling and just trying to get better every day.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Do you think Coach McConnell-Miller will pick up the electric bill?

BRITTANY SPEARS: She got the money. She can pick it up.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: The other thing that coach McConnell-Miller told me is that you own a little scooter. I don't know how you make it up and down the hills there in Boulder, but she didn't find out about the scooter until how? How did she find out you had a scooter? What event happened?

BRITTANY SPEARS: I had it in the locker room, and we were at basketball camp last summer. Her son Bryce came in and said, can I ride it? He started riding around the gym, and she figured out I had it.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: It's one of those mini scooters. I don't know how you get on.

BRITTANY SPEARS: It's real little. If it's fully charged, it goes up the hill. If not, you've got to scoot your foot to go up the hill.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Melissa, you've been known to take a dare. Keep this G-rated if you can on any dares you've taken in the past. What is the most disgusting or challenging dare you've ever taken and why?

MELISSA JONES: Well, T and I, we went skydiving. That was kind of fun.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Whitney Hand went skydiving this spring.

MELISSA JONES: I've eaten a live cricket once. That was kind of gross.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Why?

MELISSA JONES: I don't know. My teammates call me a daredevil, I guess. It's more fun, just kind of, we have challenges. It's weird.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Being a daredevil and being such a great rebounder that you are, undersized on your side, what are the personality traits that carry over there between eating a

cricket, being a great rebounder, and being undersized? There must be something inside you.

MELISSA JONES: I just think -- I don't know. It's kind of like I haven't really found something I'm too afraid of yet. I think it's kind of -- I think that might relate a little bit.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: You're not scared of Coach Mulkey?

MELISSA JONES: I do take that back. I am a little petrified of her.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: There's several of us that are. Sometimes we can be scared too.

Andrea, we know about your dad who's a body guard for Jerry Jones, the owner of the Dallas Cowboys. You have developed some relationships and friendships with some of the guys on the team. One in particular is Marion Barber. How does he inspire you, and what kind of conversations do you guys have that help you become a better basketball player?

ANDREA RILEY: Well, Marion, he always wishes me good luck during the season. And, you know, he always talks to me about like just staying determined and keeping my head up and everything. I really look up to him because he never backs down from anybody. I mean, they call him Marion the Barbarian or something. Every third down they always give it to him.

I think that relates to basketball like every time you go down, three seconds left, you know, I want the ball to try to make something happen to like dish it or even shoot from half-court or whatever.

But I think that his determination really just has an impact on me.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Jessra, there's a thing in your arena called Jessra's Jungle. What is that, and how did that come about?

JESSRA JOHNSON: Just basically my mom and some of her friends got together and decided it would be a great idea to make T-shirts and call themselves a jungle. At first I didn't even know about it. I guess my teammates and the coaches saw it before I did, and Coach Stein came in, and I got an earful about it and made fun of for it.

But, basically, just the fans from my hometown.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Do they paint their face and all that or put the T-shirts on?

JESSRA JOHNSON: My mom paints her chest sometimes.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Your mom must be -- she's pretty interesting. She's a preacher, so she usually has a message to deliver. We know some of the deliveries that Cindy serves out are preacher-like at times. Is there anything that's similar between a message your mom may send and something that Coach Stein may give you in practice?

JESSRA JOHNSON: Well, similarities. Let's see, they yell a lot. To get their message across. They both use the Lord's name in different ways. And they want the best for me. So I guess that's similar.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: That's pretty good.

Kari, Jordan Murphree from Texas Tech was here. She's involved in this program as well, Locks of Love. You do the same thing. Why? And how does that make you feel when you're able to help somebody that is in need?

KARI KINCAID: I've actually done it twice since I've been at college. And I really have always had long hair, and my mom never let me cut it, and I don't know why.

But once I got to college, I was like, yeah, I'm going to cut my hair. I just saw -- I think it was on TLC or something. They were talking about Locks of Love. I was like, that will be a way I can tell my mom a good reason to cut my hair. So I did it.

It was just a really cool thing. Ashley Sweat cut her hair for Locks of Love after I did. And recently Shalee Lehning just cut her hair for Locks of Love.

Then it's kind of trickled down on the team. My hair is short right now because I just got it cut a couple months ago. It's just something that it's just hair and it grows. I'm lucky to have it. I feel like might as well just cut it and give it to someone who might not be able to have hair.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: You've got a lot of plans coming up. You're planning for a wedding. You're planning for your career as an elementary school teacher. Tell us about what you want to do as an elementary school teacher, and will there be any coaching in that?

KARI KINCAID: I won't graduate until next December. I'm very, very excited to be in the classroom. Right now I'm in what's called my block. I'm in there every week working with kids. I'm very, very excited about it. It's definitely a passion of mine. I love being around little kids.

I have nieces and nephews that are my pride and joy. So I'm very excited about that.

And the wedding, really haven't planned much. I'm not very good at it. But I'm very excited about it. It's going to help transition from not playing basketball because it's been like a slow four-year depression coming on because like I just have so much fun playing basketball and being with my teammates that I really can't think about not playing and not being here.

It's definitely going to make the transition easier.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Isn't that what it's supposed to be, fun? Aren't you guys having fun in practice so far?

Andrea, nobody in the history of this league has ever led the league three years in scoring, and you have a chance to do that. What did you do in the off-season to prepare for that opportunity?

We just heard Coach Budke say you're going to play off the ball a little bit. How is that going to impact your ability to score?

ANDREA RILEY: Like Jeff Parr is our manager, and he's one of the best managers that you would ever, ever dream of having. And he really stretched the fact that I had to get up and come shoot.

He'll call on me. He'll wake me up when I want to sleep in because we're off. He really stressed the fact and really motivated me to want to be determined to get my shot better and show everybody that, you know, leaders have to be in the gym in order to be better the next few seasons or anything.

I think my teammates really looked up to me and told me, you know, wow, you're in the gym. I want to do that. Because, you know, we have a lot of young players.

They really look up to me and just follow what I do.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Ernie, sometimes when you face adversity, you have a certain awareness about it. You had a bad car accident right before the Big 12 tournament last year. Then when you came back and played in the tournament and into the NCAA tournament, your numbers were better than they had ever been. Why was that?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: I don't know. I had that accident actually the day before -- or the -- either the day before or that day that we were traveling to the Big 12 tournament.

And I came out, blessed and lucky, with

just a scratch on my hand. My car hydroplaned down a hill, and it was wet --

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Were you wearing a seat belt?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: I was, yes.

I ran into like a brick wall, and my car spun twice, and I landed upside down. And these guys, I guess they must have saw everything from behind me because right when I landed, I felt like they came to the door and got me out of there like that, right there.

But I don't know, I just felt like God gave me another chance. So I wasn't hurt very bad at all. So I don't know, I just had the will to play and help my team win that game.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: A renewed sense of focus maybe?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Yes.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: How has that carry over to this year? There's expectations for Texas. You've been picked very high in the polls. You've been picked second in the league. How has that carried over for you being a leader on this team?

EARNESIA WILLIAMS: Just to help my team and be a role model to our underclassmen and freshmen, and put everything out on the floor every time and just try to be a good leader.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: One of the biggest stories nationally is Brittney Griner, Melissa. It would be remiss for me not to ask you about playing with her, what it's been like, what you would anticipate it being like. We all know she can dunk, but what else can she do? Why is she going to make your team really good this year?

MELISSA JONES: Brittney Griner is very unique, not in the sense she can do 260 dunks or do some crazy things out there. She's also like a big teddy bear. She's someone who always has a smile on her face and wants to talk with you and have a nice little conversation with you. We love her. Love hanging out with her.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: You took a trip to Kenya this year. It was not a basketball related trip. What was the trip about, and what did you gain from that experience?

MELISSA JONES: There were 16 of us who went on a sports ministry team to Kenya. Just gave us the opportunity to set up some sports clinics there and just to play with kids that are there and just play some fun games and some sports. Most importantly, we were able to spread God's word. So that was kind of fun.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Brittany, I mean, Brittany Spears and Whitney Houston are

reconnected again. It's just kind of ironic that Whitney Houston is making a comeback off her injury like the other Whitney Houston is making a comeback.

You can't talk about sweet music or being in rhythm or anything. All those cliches are going to apply this year when we're doing your games. But the one thing I want to ask you about is the change in tempo this year. There's been a lot of talk about the buffs speeding it up a bit. We heard Coach McConnell-Miller talk about the conditioning program. What will be different about the style of play for you guys this year, and is it different?

BRITTANY SPEARS: Yeah, it's different. We've got a lot more guards this year than we've ever had in previous years. The speed is going to be different because it's guards. We're going to run up and down the floor more than we ever have before.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Are you going to enjoy playing in that style of play? You started your freshman year, you were quite a three-point shooter, but you've added other things to your game as you've matured.

BRITTANY SPEARS: I'm going to like playing it because it's guards and I'm a guard. I would like it better than my freshman year probably because we had to slow it down a little bit. But now we can run up and down and press and play basketball.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: One last thing I want to ask you is about the Emergency Family Assistance Association and the basketball clinics that you do for them. What is that association about? What do you guys as a team benefit from giving back to your community in Boulder?

BRITTANY SPEARS: It's about like people who are less fortunate than others. So I guess our team just helps out with like little -- give them canned goods and stuff like that and just give them stuff to help them out. We have like little benefit shows and stuff like that. We help out.

DEBBIE ANTONELLI: Okay. That's good. Everybody is involved in community service on your own campuses, I know. Ladies, thank you for joining us up here. The next is going to be sessions in the back. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon. Wish you all the best of luck this season, and we'll see you down the road.

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