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An interview with:

MISSOURI COACH MIKE ANDERSON

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Mike Anderson from Missouri.

Coach, welcome. Your thoughts about the upcoming season.

COACH ANDERSON: I'm excited about Tiger basketball. I think what took place last year, the thing I really emphasized with our guys was to take that feeling of what took place.

Not only that, all the hard work, the sweat, the tears, getting up at 6:00 in the morning and bring that into this year.

Obviously, we're going to be -- it's a different team. There's no question about it. There's a question mark. We lost some quality players when you talk about DeMarre Carroll, Leo Lyons, Matt Lawrence, and my son Mike Anderson, Jr.

But at the same time, I think this will be a new team that's got to find its own identity. With that being said, I think the brand won't change. It still is going to be the fastest 40 minutes in basketball, up-tempo, pressure. Hopefully, one of the top assist teams in the country. Assist-to-turnover ratio team. One of the more exciting teams.

If there's a word I heard more this year, this summer about our basketball team is that they were fun, they were exciting to watch. Not only that, we had some winning basketball that took place.

So I'm excited as we started practice. We've already had nine workouts since Friday. So you can imagine our guys are working and trying to get better. I think that's the key. Try to get better each and every day.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. We'll take our first question.

Q. Coach, can you talk about Mike Dixon and what he brings to your team's practice this year as a freshman.

COACH ANDERSON: I'll tell you what, Mike is one of those explosive little quick guards. He's got an old-school game, and he's got a new-school game. That means he's got that in between game.

He has a toughness that I like about him. I thought he was one of the better guards in the country, especially to play the way we want to play.

There's that learning curve, but I think each and every day he's getting better. Why? Because he's getting an opportunity to go against guys like J.T. Tiller, who's one of the better defenders in the country. Zaire Taylor, Kimmy English, Marcus Denmon. And not only that, he gets a chance to play with those guys.

So he's being exposed to the ways of the fastest 40 minutes in basketball. And especially playing defensively how we want to play. But I'm excited about Mike. He's got a great first step. I mean, just quick. And he's not an unselfish player. So I think he's kind of finding his way.

Q. Mike, what does it say about J.T. Tiller that he's on the Wooden list? But you look at his scoring average, and you immediately go, what's he doing here?

COACH ANDERSON: I'll tell you what, J.T.'s a special player. I think if you watched our basketball team play last year, I thought he was the heart and soul of our basketball team at the guard position.

A lot of time, as J.T. went, our team went.

I thought DeMarre was the heart and soul of our team at the forward position. So we had two of those kind of players on our basketball team.

There's a reason why we won 31 games. So now coming into this year, I think he's going to be the heart and soul of our team.

But I'll tell you what, it just tells you the guy's a winner. He's just a winner. What does he bring to our team? He brings a toughness, an unselfishness, winning attitude.

Last year I made the statement in a press conference, you know, talk about the five stars, the four stars, the two stars and all that -- you can't put a star on a guy's heart like that. You saw what he did this past year. I think he's going to be even better this year. I really do.

I think he's had an opportunity to have surgery on his wrist. He's worked extremely hard. He's one of those power guards that played to win. I'm glad he's on our team.

Q. Mike, about Zaire Taylor. I think he's fond of saying if his job status ever hits a low point that he can come back to Missouri and get a job because he beat Kansas. Has he become something of a -- maybe the number two heart right behind J.T.?

COACH ANDERSON: I think he's one of those captains that we have on our basketball team. I think he's settled down, and I think he's going to take on a bigger role, as well as J.T.

When you look at those guys, I call them the T&T boys, the T&T guys, Taylor and Tiller. I'll tell you what, I think it's one of the more underrated guard tandem in the country.

There's a reason why we won 31 games. I mean, you don't -- I think you have to take a look back. We led the nation in assists. We led the nation in assist-to-turnover ratio. This is a team that was number five in the country in scoring, playing up-tempo. I think you got good guard play when that takes place.

I think people fail to recognize that. Sometimes people look at the scoring, and no question about it, I think they've got to be able to score more this year. Hopefully, they'll continue to do the things they did for our basketball team last year.

I think the brand will continue. But I think this Zaire will be one of those guys that you talk about. He's more subtle in his role as he was last year.

I thought leadership was important with our basketball team and ownership. So this is their team. J.T., Zaire, and Keith and Justin Safford.

Q. Coach, your team last year, one of the challenges might have been finding the go-to guy on offense. You can just put the ball on the floor and score. DeMarre might have been closest to that. This year I know you expected more from Zaire and J.T. offensively. But do you think Kimmy can develop into a guy

that can put the ball on the floor more and be part of that go-to scoring option?

COACH ANDERSON: I think, as this team continues to develop its identity, that's going to be apparent, a guy such as Kimmy. He has a knack for scoring or getting to the line. Or even a guy like J.T. Tiller.

You've seen those guys in crucial situations make plays. I think, for some team, they may have just one go-to guy. We may have about three or four. Which is better?

Because as an opposing coach, who are you going to key in on? But I think you've got to have somebody that's going to bring it and can get it for you each and every night.

But I think even with our team last year, you saw Zaire make big shots for us, J.T. make big shots for us. I think you see other guys do it this year. I think we're a team that's going to be unpredictable.

I think, as you sit here and say, will Kimmy be that guy? It can be Marcus Denmon. Laurence Bowers. I think each game will dictate that.

I think we've got some guys that can. It's going to be by committee early on. I think it kind of works its way out.

Q. Coach, do you think your former boss, Nolan Richardson, will be energized by his new job with the WNBA team in Tulsa?

COACH ANDERSON: Where did that come from? You know, I think he is. I talk to him probably every day, every other day. He's kind of intrigued. You've got to look at coach's past, his history. The guy's done everything else. I mean, you think about it. He won a junior college championship. I had an opportunity to play against his team in the junior college championship game.

He won the NIT championship at Tulsa. He won the NCAA tournament at Arkansas. And now he has a WNBA job.

You know what's going to happen next? He going to win a WNBA championship. Trust me, he will.

But I think he's intrigued by it. He's excited to have an opportunity because, again, there are always going to be the naysayers that he can't do this here. He's been told that all his life.

So I think he's out to prove something again. I'm happy for him and excited for him.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, best of luck and have a great season. We appreciate it.

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