

**October 20, 2010**



An interview with:

## **COACH KIM MULKEY**

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Kim Mulkey of Baylor. We would like to welcome you to the dais. Coach will take questions right off the bat.

**Q. A year ago you weren't thrilled about -- you were unhappy about the team to beat was such a young team. How do you feel about being number one this year now that your team is a year older and showed something in the tournament last year?**

COACH MULKEY: We're honored to have received the votes that we did. I think it puts a little added pressure on you because if you look at our basketball team, we only lost one senior last year, but, yet, at the same time, we're young. And most of those kids that got playing time are sophomores now.

We will have great expectations, but at the same time, we're realists in that our schedule both nonconference and in the league is going to make it very difficult. Somebody has to be picked number one, so we'll take it.

**Q. Kim, could you just talk about with the returning starters but also the newcomers you have coming in, both the freshmen and the transfers, how that may change the way teams have to defense Brittney. Will she see fewer two or three -- you know, double teams, triple teams, sagging zone defense, and simply because of the year of experience and also the talent you have right now?**

COACH MULKEY: We have more depth this year than ever. This is the most talented team that I have ever coached at Baylor, but it is also a team that has more depth than I have ever had. I don't know how teams will defend Brittney. I'm sure she will continue to see the double and triple

teams. I'm sure we will continue to see a lot of zone defenses.

But as you saw last year, as we got better and became more comfortable with each other, Brittney was able to find players around her that could take the scoring burden off of her. I think we have a great leader in Melissa Jones and a captain who hopefully will stay healthy all year.

Kelli Griffin is another senior that comes back at the point position. The transfers, Destiny Williams will be eligible the day after we play Tennessee. Brooklyn Pope is playing her best basketball right now.

Odyssey Sims has been cleared to play from the ACL surgery. And my daughter, Makenzie, is there and can shoot the basketball. So maybe she'll get some playing time.

**Q. Who is most likely to open things up with shooting for Brittney inside since you do have so many new players?**

COACH MULKEY: With the depth we have, it would be difficult for me to tell you. You know Melissa Jones. You know you are going to see her on the perimeter, and you know you are going to see Kelli Griffin on the perimeter. You know you will see Brittney Griner in the paint.

The other two spots change from day-to-day. And that's a good problem to have, because there is great competition in practice every day. There is lots to choose from. And when those don't get it done, we try two more.

So today I can tell you three, but I can't tell you the other two.

**Q. As good as Brittney Griner was good last year, do you think we have seen the best of her? Or do you think she is continuing to grow and improve?**

COACH MULKEY: I hope you haven't. I hope the coaching staff is able to elevate her game to a new level.

I hope that Brittney will continue to get stronger. She doesn't have a body that's just going to put on a lot of weight, but she can get stronger.

And I think in the weight room it is very important that she understood what happened to her last year when in games she would fatigue or get pushed around a lot, hopefully she will be motivated by that and take her game to another level.

I think the talent around her will continue to help Brittney. Brittney is not on a basketball team where she has to do it by herself.

Yes, a lot of attention is drawn to her. And that's understandable. But she has got a lot, a lot of people around her that will help her game take it to the next level.

**Q. Given Melissa's importance to the team and also the fact she plays so hard, have you ever considered maybe limiting her minutes at least early in the season given what she's gone through?**

COACH MULKEY: She probably wouldn't like that and wouldn't agree to it. But, yes, I've even at times -- last year when she -- it first surfaced with the leg reaction, will shut her down and took the advice of doctors and our trainer that if we didn't practice her and only played her in games, that she would be okay. Well, obviously that didn't work because when it came to conference, she couldn't go.

Melissa is always going to have nagging aches and pains because she does play extremely hard. What you see on the floor in games is what we see every day in practice. To think that I could ask her to stand on the sideline and not play, she couldn't do it. There's some athletes that would welcome that. Melissa is just one that feels like she is not a part of it if she is not out there playing.

We will be extremely smart with her. She's healthy. Good to go. No leg problems. But if there ever surfaces something with her health, I certainly am always going to ask a physician and a trainer first what we should do and be very conservative and careful.

I want her to have a great senior year. I said when she is a freshmen she would be an all-Big 12 performer before she left Baylor and you saw she is one of the five picked on the all-conference preseason team and she deserves that.

**Q. Obviously you have a very strong sophomore class. I think the Big 12 freshmen last year as a class was very strong. Who are some of the other maybe young players that we**

**saw last year that might make a big impact this year?**

COACH MULKEY: Well, you saw a lot of the freshmen on our team play when Melissa got hurt. You saw Kimetria Hayden make the big steal in the Duke game to help us win that game. And you saw until she got hurt a little bit in the Iowa State game, you saw Jordan Madden. You will now see two other sophomores that you didn't see last year, Brooklyn Pope transfer from Rutgers and Destiny Williams, transfer from Illinois.

I'm sure I'm missing others. But those four initially jump out in that sophomore class that will see significant minutes.

**Q. Everybody all summer has talked about this Baylor-UConn game coming up. I know you have games before that. Can you just talk about how important it is that people think of your program as being a program that can challenge a team like UConn. You have won a National Championship. Just the fact that you have elevated the program to that level.**

COACH MULKEY: Well, last year I said it was UConn and everybody else, and that proved to be true. This year there is not a dominant team, in my opinion, that we had last year. I think there are many teams that can vie for a National Championship and UConn is certainly one of them.

UConn is the national champion until somebody proves otherwise. UConn continues to have the winning streak until somebody beats them. We will get an opportunity quickly to play them.

It is indeed an honor to play them, but more important than the honor of playing Connecticut, it is the fact that we get to be seen on national television again, we get to be mentioned in the same breath as UConn and that just is so valuable to our program and to our university.

And I guess like the rest of them that will play UConn, we get a shot at trying to beat them.

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