

October 20, 2010



An interview with:

COACH CONNIE YORI

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Connie Yori from Nebraska. Your thoughts before we take some questions?

COACH YORI: Well, I would like to say it is great to be back to Kansas City, but if you go back to our season a year ago, we had two losses and both of them were in Kansas City. I maybe have realized that we've got to quit feeding our players barbecue because they must be allergic to it or something. I personally am a big brisket fan, but it seems that our team is not.

But, again, it is good to be here. I love Kansas City and this is always a great venue for the Big 12 tournament.

Little bit about our season upcoming here, of course, we are coming off a terrific season a year ago. Last year at this time, we were practicing, to give you an analogy, we were practicing at a level that I would compare to doing calculus, pretty advanced.

And right now we are practicing more at a level of learning our ABCs. We are very young, we are very different. But I think we have an exciting opportunity here. We have got two very good guards in our program. And I think any time that you can start with two good guards in Lindsey Moore and Dominique Kelley, I think that's a great start. We are going to have a change of the guard, so to speak, in a lot of ways, but I think we got two great guards that we can really begin to focus on and try to do more things for them to get -- to make our team better.

Q. Could you talk maybe more specifically with the freshmen, because they are going to have to play, and what they can do.

COACH YORI: Right. We have a very good freshmen group. If you look at athletically where our five freshmen are compared to where our outgoing group of seniors were at the same stage athletically, our freshmen are quite a ways ahead of where our outgoing seniors were at the same stage.

And we do various tests in the fall in terms of conditioning tests and testing them in the weight room, testing their agility from an athletic standpoint.

We got a pretty good group. And I think the player right now that has stood out the most in our practice setting -- in our early season practice is Jordan Hooper, kid from Nebraska. She has a chance to be a really good player at this level. I'm never one to blow up kids, and, in fact, I usually do the opposite. But Jordan is pretty special -- going to be a pretty special player in our program and talked about athleticism. She is a 6' 2" kid. We do an agility test and she set an all-time record in our agility test this fall. And that includes every player that I have ever -- that has ever played under me. That includes people like Yvonne Turner and Dominique Kelley, kids who are quick and athletic, and here is a 6' 2" kid who has already done that. She's very, very skilled and a great shooter. So we're excited about her.

We have a number of other freshmen. We have the player of the year in the State of Arizona in our program, Rebecca Woodbury. Again, freshmen are -- it is going to be a learning process for them. We got a good group, but we have got to focus on the process every day. And there is a lot there that they need to learn.

Q. Losing all the seniors last year, how much of a turnaround or building does it take then for these talented young players to really find their niche?

COACH YORI: Well, I think our leadership has been, overall, pretty good. Unfortunately, we haven't had Dominique Kelley in our practice setting yet because she has been injured, but hopefully we can get her back here in a week or

two.

But our leadership is good. We have some upperclassmen who maybe haven't necessarily played a lot of minutes but have been in our practice setting and understand our system and understand what we try to do and have done a good job leadership-wise. But, again, there's a lot of difference between a four-year senior who has played a lot over the history of their career versus someone who doesn't really even know where to go to get their equipment, doesn't even know their way to find a pair of shoes right now.

So we're real different, but, yet, it's exciting. It is also one of those things as a coach that we have got to tone it back a little bit in terms of the progress we're able to make on a daily basis. And we just need to be patient and we need to be persistent and keep plugging away.

Q. Still looking at the conference, you are the defending champs. How does the race look this season?

COACH YORI: Well, to me it's -- there's three teams that have the experience in itself that, I think, have set themselves apart. I think Baylor and A&M and I think Iowa State. I picked Iowa State quite a ways ahead of where they were picked in the overall picture of the preseason poll. And I think Iowa State has got a lot of kids back and have got a great postgame, had some great young players that developed.

But, of course, Baylor coming off a Final Four season and returning virtually everyone and A&M won the Big 12 tournament. I think Oklahoma is the other team you got to talk about when they have one of the best point guards in the country in Danielle Robinson.

But as always, the race is what it is. And it is going to be a daily grind and there is not going to be any easy ones. I always say the single hardest thing to do in the Big 12 is win one game. And that is a challenge in itself on a daily basis.

So it will be interesting to see how things fall, but at the same time, there's going to be some teams -- there is going to be a surprise team. And who that is, I don't know.

Q. You talked about maybe a little bit of a leadership void. How much do you feel like the people you do have coming back are going to be able to step in right away, including Lindsey obviously, even though she is only a sophomore.

COACH YORI: Are you talking about those who did not play for us?

Q. Being leaders.

COACH YORI: Well, Dominique Kelley is one of the best leaders I have ever coached. And unfortunately, she hasn't been on the floor for us, but, you know, she is a classic leader by example first. But she is also very articulate and has got the ability to motivate and always seems to say the right thing.

And I think Lindsey has got a lot of those same qualities. Great leader by example and I think she is going to take on a greater leadership role for us this year even though she is a sophomore. But she started every single game for us last year as a freshman and on a very good team. So she learned a lot from our upperclassmen, and that's normal. And she is a smart kid that was able to understand what it took us to get where we were a year ago.

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