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An interview with:

COACH KURT BUDKE

THE MODERATOR: We're up here with Coach Kurt Budke from Oklahoma State. Coach, welcome. And your opening thoughts before we take questions.

COACH BUDKE: Obviously great to be back in Kansas City. Me being a Midwest person, I love this site and love this tournament. I think it's an awful special place to play basketball, always have and always will.

I doubt there's very many people that are going to sit up here today and talk about losing the all-time leading scorer in the Big 12 and losing 15 points and 19 rebounds a night and then also tell you that they're having the most fun that I have had in a long time.

We've got a very young group, one of the youngest groups in the Big 12, if not the youngest. And we're -- but they are practicing so hard right now. And I think they just see an opportunity that maybe you wouldn't have at another program right now that have a whole lot of people back.

And we're having a great time. And, you know, Andrea Riley, how do you replace Andrea Riley? Well, you don't. She's an unbelievable player, an unbelievable person. And we just try to do it with everybody else getting a little bit better. And Toni Young, Lakyn Garrison, and Precious Robinson, those people stepping up a little bit.

You know, people talk about Andrea, but they forget about Tegan Cunningham, too, who I thought had an unbelievable senior year with us last year, too. So it is going to be interesting. I don't have any predictions, but we are sure having a good time.

Q. Kurt, do you have an example of the basketball team in the past, college or professional, that lose a great player or a star

player and then they are okay or pretty good the next year?

COACH BUDKE: I wish I had an example of that. I don't. I can't think of that. I mean, I -- I mean, no, I really don't. You are talking about not just one, you are talking about two great players. Tegan Cunningham was playing as well as any wing in America at the end of last year. She went down to Australia and is tearing up it up.

You are talking about two great players. We ran -- everything ran through Andrea. That's probably the difference between what we lost and other teams have lost that we're trying to think of, is that they probably didn't run everything through them.

Like a Kevin Durant from Texas, he receives on the receiving end. Well, Andrea led us in assists, led us in scoring. And when other people got shots, it was because of her. She had great assist totals last year, too.

So I doubt there are very many examples of what we're going through right here. We've chosen to go with youth instead of going out and trying to fill it with a JC kid or a kid we think maybe had 60 games under their belt in junior college. We just decided to do what we did with Andrea four years is throw the keys to her and let's see what happens. That's what we're doing. We've got two freshman point guards on campus that we really like. What I hope is that people, they compare these freshman point guards to Andrea when she was a freshman and not when Andrea was a senior. That's what I'm afraid they're going to do.

No, I can't think of an example that was as unique as ours.

Q. Obviously when you have someone who took all those shots and scored all those points, somebody else is going to get those shots and get those points. Do you have any idea who that is or is it wait and see?

COACH BUDKE: Well, one of the things that I think helped us last year -- I mean, we weren't really excited about at the time, but playing

that first round NCAA tournament game without Andrea last year, you know, it gives us an opportunity -- a kid like a Toni Young to step up and go get 25 points and figure out that, you know what? I can do it.

All the kids that played last year, again, I think they hesitate a little bit looking to score because you had Andrea and Tegan out there and in their mind, they thought they were better options.

I think that Chattanooga game really helped us. I looked for Toni to step up and Lakyn to step up. We didn't get Lakyn Garrison enough shots last year. We will get her more shots.

Precious Robinson had her best practice of the year yesterday. She had some very good time in the league last year. All the kids that are back, we all hope they step their game up a little bit.

You will see a lot of freshmen out there for us this year. You might even see five freshmen on the floor at one time.

Q. When we were walking up here we were talking about Keuna Flax. Can you talk about her and what excites you so much about her, a player nobody has really seen yet?

COACH BUDKE: She is a tremendous scorer. As coaches, we are looking for people that can finish and put the ball in the hole.

The problem is she blew her knee out last year, sat out, red shirted. She is coming back this year. We really thought she is the best scorer in the gym again. She breaks her foot and she is out till Christmas at least.

So, you know, we all -- we need scoring in this league and she is someone that can do it. She is like a Danielle Green that you remember. She is that kind of player that can just get it done in a lot of different ways. We are just going to have to -- not even think about that right now. Find other people to step up and get it done. Hopefully she can come back and help us.

Q. Coach, in terms of leadership, losing Tegan, losing Ally, losing Andrea, losing Megan, who is your biggest leader? Who do you see stepping up and taking those four guys' places?

COACH BUDKE: I think Lakyn Garrison has done a wonderful job in practice leading by example. I would like her to be really more vocal. It is not really in her nature, but nobody outworks her every single day.

And I think my two freshman point guards have been leading by example, too. And it is hard for freshmen to jump in and be the leader and get up -- get on the upperclassmen.

But I think those two will earn the right because of their work ethic every day. So at this point -- you want your point guards to be the captain, the quarterback. And I think those point guards ultimately will before the year is done.

Q. Speaking of Lakyn, what, in terms of on the court, is she a leader? Do you feel her stepping up and being that person on the court?

COACH BUDKE: I think she is someone -- she is just such a solid person that she is really -- she doesn't make very many mistakes in my eyes on or off the floor.

And I think the girls, especially the young ones, recognize that. And when Lakyn talks, they listen because she does things right all the time. So I think that's -- she is the one that can still go to another level for us and help us with that.

Q. Talking to Lakyn and Toni over there, they said you guys are doing everything a lot more athletic, a lot of running and getting harder on defense. Is that something that you think goes with athleticism with a freshman, or do you want to play more full court this year?

COACH BUDKE: Well, we didn't have the ability to press as much as we'd like to, pick up full court as much as we would like to because Andrea would love to go for the steal and before you knew it, she would have two fouls in ten seconds. We didn't pick up much because she had to be on the floor. I think you will see a different style from us this year, kind of how my teams played at Louisiana Tech. We will cause a little more havoc in the back court.

And I think we have the depth to do it finally. So, I think they see more of the running right now just because we're playing at both ends harder than we did in the last four years.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about Tiffany Bias and what she brings to the program.

COACH BUDKE: I have never had a kid in my life win sprints by 20 feet every time that she runs a sprint. It is unbelievable.

I mean, she's -- I don't know if you can be as quick as Andrea was, but this kid is fast. And, I

mean, her work ethic is that she never wants to finish second. She always wants to win every sprint, win every race. Be first in line. That's what we are hoping for out of a freshman point guard.

Her and Carissa Crutchfield out of Ft. Gibson, Oklahoma, have both worked that hard in the fall so far. But I think they're going to give us the ability to pick up and get after people more than we've done in the past. And we have never had a lot of great depth at the point, and I think we do now.

Q. Do either one of those two remind you of Andrea when she was a freshman?

COACH BUDKE: Tiffany does. Tiffany, again, has that little jet in her that she can get by people. She is not afraid to shoot a three-pointer three feet behind the line if she thinks it is a good shot.

The thing that Tiffany does a lot better than Andrea is play defense. And so that's also exciting, too.

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