

October 20, 2010



An interview with:

COACH GAIL GOESTENKORS

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Coach Gail Goestenkers from the University of Texas. We would like to welcome you. Do you have opening comments?

COACH GOESTENKORS: Well, I can't believe it is another season. It goes so quickly, it seems. Just very excited as always for another season to begin. And it is going to come fast and furious. And I think -- well, that depicts the Big 12, fast and furious.

Once again, I think we all feel we have got the best league in the country. And I'm excited about my team. As most of you probably know, we have had some setbacks with some injuries in particular with Cokie Reed. So we will change our style of play a little bit. We thought we would be a big strong power team with Cokie Reed and Ashley Gayle on the inside. So we are a little thin and small in the post. Really only got two legitimate post players, which makes us pretty small.

So we will do some different things. I have got five freshmen, six newcomers. So we are going to change things up a little bit. Run probably more than we have in the past and use some traps and some different presses to try to utilize our speed and our guard strength. I feel really good about our guards.

All of our returners, I think, have definitely improved. They're bigger. They're stronger. They have worked really hard in the weight room and with conditioning. So I think we will be a very aggressive, very scrappy team, which we will need to be. We really don't have a lot of depth, especially at that post position.

We're excited, the team's excited. I think they are in better shape than they have ever been. They have worked harder than they ever had. At the end of last year, we said if you want to get more, you got to give more. I think these young ladies have certainly already given more in terms

of getting themselves ready mentally and physically for the rugged and brutal season that we have.

Q. I can't help but think everything you said right now you could have applied to your 2002 Duke team that ended up with eight kids. It seems like it was a slasher team. You didn't have a lot of size. You had to play well defensively in system. Do you sort of see some comparisons? And you have also had teams where you had big players. So you see the comparison of what you are going to be doing this year as opposed to maybe what you thought you were going to be doing.

COACH GOESTENKORS: It has been an adjustment. But I always -- I love challenges and see them as opportunities to grow as a coach. So we've had to kind of go back to the drawing board. I have watched a lot more tape recently, especially since we knew Cokie wasn't going to be playing with us. And just trying to find the best way to utilize the talent that we have.

And I have never thought you needed 15 players to be successful. We all know that come tournament time and in the big games, you probably play seven or eight players really quality minutes. So that's what we're going to just start off with. Usually you finish off with that. We are beginning with that.

So they know they have to be in great shape. But I'm excited about the opportunity to kind of turn these kids loose a little bit. They love the new transition that we're really focusing on. Any kid loves to shoot (smiling). Right now we are getting a lot of shots off. And hopefully we will get a lot of makes off as well. We are not to that point yet. So we are still adjusting, I think, to the up tempo.

Q. Obviously you can't play through Cokie now and don't necessarily have a true point guard in the starting lineup. So who do you play through, if anybody, and who is your go-to player?

COACH GOESTENKORS: I think it's going to be a variety, I think. Ashleigh Fontenette is -- even though she is not a true point, she is a combo point with a scorer's mentality. And she's -- I thought she got so much better through the course of last year. It was tough on her because she hadn't played the point since middle school. I think she took some lumps last year.

She learned so much, and she is a supreme athlete. And I think a supreme point guard now. I think she is going to be as good as any point guard in the country this year. So she's somebody we're relying on. And we expect big things from her, and she expects them from herself.

And then Kat Nash, she has always been a steady scorer for her, and I have talked to her. Really, Anne Marie and (inaudible), and they should make the most shots on our team. I'd rather have a contested shot from them than a wide-open shot from some of the young ones that don't know any better yet.

We are focusing on getting the balls in their hands. Kat will play all five positions. You might see her. One minute she will bring the ball down and start our offense. That's one of the things we are doing because we don't have a lot of point guards on our team, anybody can bring the ball down the floor with the exception of Ashley Gayle and Anne Marie Hartung, our two post players.

Kat may be playing the center position for us, but she may bring the ball down the floor and start our offense. So we are going to give some people some different things that they have to defend as well. We know we are not as deep in the post, so we are going to utilize and force them to defend us on the other end of the floor.

Q. You kind of talked about it just briefly, but obviously you want to create mismatches when you guys are on offense. But just in this league, especially with the size inside, just talk about the challenges you will be facing and how much they will be on Ashley from a defensive standpoint to not get in foul trouble and try to be a force in there?

COACH GOESTENKORS: We have talked to all of our returners in particular because they are the ones that have those experiences and know what it takes to be successful in league and we told them they can't get in foul trouble.

We will be very aggressive and we will trap more and run more. We also have to be the

smartest team that we have been and Ashley Gayle can't afford to get in foul trouble. She is a hot blocker. She has to be very, very smart (shot). We will play more zone probably this year than we have played since I have been here because there will come times when we will have to protect her inside.

Q. What's it like having seven newcomers? Is there a feeling of freshness?

COACH GOESTENKORS: We have six newcomers. One of the walk-ones has walked on. But there is an excitement. I haven't had this many in I can't tell you how many years. You probably know more than I do.

There's such an excitement about them. I was talking to Kat the other day about our leadership and some things, and she said, you know, there's -- the freshmen want to be led. They have high energy. They work so hard and they want to be led. So it's really a great feeling. You have to have great leadership. But you also have to have followers. And I think that's something that we haven't had necessarily, and this year we definitely have both. So it is a real good feeling, it is a fresh feeling.

Q. This thing with Cokie is fairly recent. How much extra time, long nights, have you had to put in to do -- to implement all the things you just spoke of?

COACH GOESTENKORS: It's been -- our entire staff, I think we have done -- we have had a lot of long nights and a lot of discussions about what are our strengths now, what are our weaknesses now. As any coach would, you are trying to really make sure you utilize your strengths and we have, I think, great guards, very strong, physical -- Ashleigh Fontenette, Yvonne Anderson, Chassidy Fussell, who you haven't seen yet, she's a freshman, Tiffany Moore, those four guards are as strong and athletic as any guards that we will see. We have got to utilize those guards.

And then with Kat we have somebody that's so versatile that can play so many positions, that's where we're going from. And then a great shot blocker obviously in Ashley Gayle. We have talked through things, really trying to scrutinize our team and understand fully what our strengths and weaknesses are.

Q. Gail, you talked about the injuries

obviously and that has been a setback for you. When you look back at it, even though you have been a regular NCAA team, has it been more of a struggle at Texas than you thought it would be when you first took the job? Were you fairly realistic about where things stood?

COACH GOESTENKORS: I don't think I was realistic. You know, I think any coach that's been successful expects success and expects it immediately. So I think we have been successful being able to get into the NCAA tournament these first three years. It wasn't as easy -- it was a struggle, especially that first year. We had to win maybe -- I don't know what -- six games in a row to get into the tournament. But I think we all -- if you are a winner, you have high expectations and you expect to win immediately. So it has taken longer, but now I think I have a better perspective on it. I understand how far we truly had to go and also that we are going to do things the right way and sometimes that does take a little bit longer.

I have come to terms with it now.

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