

October 19, 2011



An Interview With:

**BAYLOR
COACH KIM MULKEY**

THE MODERATOR: Coach Mulkey has said she's going to skip the opening comments as usual. We'll go straight to questions. Who has the first question for Kim?

Q. Kim, obviously a lot of people back from last year's team that had an awful lot of success. But how much of a motivation, if any, do you think the fact that you came up short of where you wanted to be last year, how much will that be the way the season ended?

COACH MULKEY: I don't know that I'll have to say a whole lot. I think when you have a goal to win a national championship and you don't reach that goal, that if you're any kind of a competitor, the hunger should be there.

And it's there. Fortunately, we have the majority of our players back with the exception of the two seniors that we lost, which we all know the value of a Melissa Jones, you don't just replace her overnight.

But I don't imagine that I'm going to have to do a lot of motivating to remind them that isn't it sad that a 34-3 record is not good enough.

Q. What do you think that Brittney and Odyssey gained this summer from using with the USA Basketball teams and what do you look forward to seeing them take forth from that experience?

COACH MULKEY: I hope off the court they learned as much as they did on the court, just going out of the country and seeing places and things they've never experienced.

I think on the court, every time they have a basketball in their hand, they become better. And I think Odyssey, finally, with not having to think about the knee injury, is really getting back to the

player that she was. And she's just night and day between the end of last season and now because of the knee being healthy.

Brittney for the first time in her career was the small player, playing overseas against players her size, older, bigger, faster, stronger, allowed her to see, as dominant as she is at the collegiate level, at the international level she's still a young pup.

Q. Every coach has their own philosophy about how to approach being the favorite and you're picked to win the league. How do you approach being the favorite and everyone considering you the team to beat?

COACH MULKEY: I think it changes from team to team. Sometimes you don't want to be the favorite. You like the underdog role because your team will work harder. Sometimes you embrace the favorite because your team understands how good they are and they work hard anyway.

I think that last year we didn't really want to embrace it, because we were young. This year, junior, senior team, we should embrace that and understand the expectations that come with it, the pressure that comes with it and let's go see if we can do well and win another Big 12 championship and see if we can't get to a Final Four and win a national championship.

Q. Obviously realignment had focused a lot on some of the traditional football rivalries, but you look at yourselves and A&M have built a great women's basketball rivalry. Any thought about continuing that rivalry past this year, any discussions on that?

COACH MULKEY: Why did I know that somebody was going to ask that? I put a lot of thought into it, because I figured it would be asked. And I'm going to answer it thoughtfully, with a little humor, but I hope you get my message.

I remember Texas A&M's president with these quotes: It's like a marriage. If it's over, it's over. Loftin, didn't he say that? And he went on to say: Should we feel we're being kept against our

will which we feel was inappropriate. It's very disappointing. These are his words.

Who wants to be in a relationship that's over and has no value for you? And that stuck with me. So basically he's talking about a divorce. And I think I know a little bit about a divorce.

And my feeling is this: If a man wants to divorce me and says our relationship has no value to him, and then he asks me if he can sleep with me, the answer is: No!

Q. If I could sort of follow up on that a little bit, though. The whole realignment carousel, mess, whatever you want to call it, potentially could have left you guys outside of BCS conference. It didn't happen. But this past summer and last summer, while you were watching all this go on, were you worried about where Baylor was going to end up in terms of conference affiliation and how that would impact your program and the state of women's basketball?

COACH MULKEY: I think we're all worried about it. Not just Baylor. We would not have been the only school left out. Basketball, in particular, is not worrisome to me. I was at Louisiana Tech as an independent for years and we won national championships.

I think in basketball, you're going to always be protected somewhat because you're going to have a tournament. You're going to be one of the 64 selected if you're good.

I was concerned for our university in football, because you don't ever want to take away an opportunity for a Robert Griffin or a team that could be a surprise team to have a chance to be a national champion some day.

So maybe my sport, not concerned. My university, concerned for football.

Let me finish my thing. And you can follow up on this. I think since 1974 we've played Texas A&M twice a year every year. In fact, in the history of Lady Bear basketball, that's the program we've played more than any.

And we're not going to play them anymore, because they decided that playing us was not important to them.

Q. Really don't have a follow-up to that, Kim. I did want to ask you, though, you've got other players besides Odyssey and Brittney and looking at Shanay, who is starting for you before she had the knee injury last year, how has she come back from that?

COACH MULKEY: Let me tell you, Shanay was coming along great and she went to see the doctor on another issue that was just -- I think it was her lower leg was just tender. And that turned out to be nothing.

But while they were in there, this was in July, I think, they said let's take a look at the graft. The graft wasn't good. So they went back in her knee.

So I'll make a decision when Shanay is ready if there's enough season left to play her and have her contribute and be the player we know she is, or if we would apply for another year medically for her.

Q. I know you said Brittney had to get used to players bigger, stronger, faster and experienced. But it seemed like she fit in well with this group. Not just on the court but how much she was liked by these players, how much she seems to have, I guess, fit in as one of the elite players in women's basketball. Can you just talk about that maybe personal growth along with her growth as a basketball player?

COACH MULKEY: Brittney Griner has been that player throughout the time I have known her. I've known her since the eighth grade. And unfortunately many of you crucified her when she had a meltdown against Texas Tech and I told you, you don't know Brittney Griner, what she did was horrible. Brittney Griner is the most happy-go-lucky, fun, tender, soft kid you'll ever meet in a big body.

And just as all in life, we make mistakes. And she's never wavered from who she is. She's never changed who she is. She's the most humble, non-arrogant athlete that has the credentials that she has that I've ever coached.

Q. I find it unique you're wearing purple in Kansas City. I don't know if it was for a Deb Patterson or for Alzheimer's awareness for Coach Summitt or tomorrow is anti-bullying day, wear purple?

COACH MULKEY: All of the above. I'm a mother. I know everything, Debbie.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.
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