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An Interview With:

KANSAS STATE COACH DEB PATTERSON

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Patterson from Kansas State. Your opening comments?

COACH PATTERSON: It's exciting to think about competing in a new Big 12 Conference this year. You know, playing that round-robin and seeing the league adjust to this type of schedule will be a tremendous challenge for all of us and something that sort of is like a new horizon.

So we're excited to be a part of it and looking forward to a great season at Kansas State with two tremendous returners, in particular Brittany Chambers and Jalana Childs that will sort of anchor the efforts at Kansas State this season.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. You talked about the round-robin schedule, which is obviously going to be a huge double round-robin, actually, there will be a huge story line. But what do you think the implications of that are? Is it too early to tell? Do you think we'll see different feel to this season than past seasons?

COACH PATTERSON: Yeah, I think the league will have a very unique and different feeling to it, just because of the change in the schedule. I think it will absolutely, unequivocally, establish us as the most competitive and number one competitive conference in the nation.

I mean, before you even play a game, you look at the matchups from top to bottom that will occur this season, and it's mindboggling.

So to me it's just elevated the quality, the intensity, the competitiveness. I think we'll also see interesting play when it comes time for Big 12 tournament play, because of the rigors of the double round-robin, and then reigniting yourself

again during that Big 12 Conference and then transitioning into the NCAA Tournament.

I think it will be an interesting dynamic from inside and out to observe this season.

Q. I'd like to ask you the same thing I asked Kim: From your perspective, in the last few years, there was a worry, I think, from K-State that you guys were going to be left out of some traditional rivalries, left out of a BCS conference and basketball wasn't even being talked about. It was like you guys were just along for the ride. Was that frustrating? Was it difficult because it was something you guys really didn't have any control over; you're just waiting to see what happened?

COACH PATTERSON: Well, I think at Kansas State, from within the coaching ranks, we had great confidence in the strength of the Big 12 Conference. I can't speak for administration. But I felt like the Kansas State administration was very, very confident in the stability and the strength of the Big 12.

And so within, I never really felt any sense of panic, nor did Coach Martin, if I could speak for him. So it was interesting to watch the evolution.

To tell you the truth, it was very puzzling to me, because in one of America's strongest conferences across the board, championships, in all sports, it was interesting to watch the movement and the talk and the possibilities that were being presented. But there wasn't at all a sense of panic from within the Kansas State institution or coaching ranks, I don't believe.

And I think there is the reality that college football is an enormous support system for all athletic programs across the country. I think you would say that in professional sports as it relates to the NFL, being a primary drive in terms of the professional sport world and the strength there.

So I think it stands to reason that collegiate football would carry that torch as well. And we had great, great confidence at Kansas State in the strength of our athletic programs. And again in the strength of this league.

I think basketball is highly regarded and respected across the nation on both the men's and women's side. In the Big 12, I'm just not sure that it was a talk point as it related to potential conference realignment.

And for me, that just was the reality of the differences in the financial strength and power of football programs versus those of basketball programs. But when you really evaluate the sports, per se, and the strength of men's and women's college basketball in the Big 12, we go toe to toe with anyone in the nation.

Q. What do you think about the possibility of ending your 100-year rivalry with Missouri, if that should be an eventuality?

COACH PATTERSON: I think in this time of change, it's interesting to contemplate those kind of changes, and there's always an element of it's a bittersweet thought process to think of rivalries changing.

New ones will emerge. But it's always hard in the present day to press forward to 100 years from now when you're sitting here. You know, some day someone will be talking about a rivalry that Kansas State has been a part of 50 or 60 years from now that I believe will change because college landscape and athletics is going to constantly evolve.

We have obviously great level of respect for Missouri and the matchups we've always had. But in this day of change, we have to be ready for adjustments, and we'll find new rivalries and sustain those that are still a part of the Big 12.

Q. I remember being here a couple of years ago, and I think there were three or four of us in the room with the Big 12 setting attendance records. Obviously a somewhat increased amount of interest from my fellows in the media. Talk about how the sport has grown on your campus and in your community.

COACH PATTERSON: It's a continuum. It's awesome to see the quality of our league continue to grow. There's tremendous talent in the Midwest and in this league.

This league attracts many of the best and premier players in the country, and that should draw significant media attention. And I think the Big 12, the quality of players, the tremendous potential and future Hall of Fame coaches that make up this women's basketball conference, I think draw in media attention.

When you see programs like Baylor and Texas A&M win and compete for national championships, it's exciting. It's where you want to be, if you want to be surrounded by the best in the women's game, and consequently people are here. It's exciting to follow.

I think at Kansas State, we've had as you said top 25 attendance. Several years throughout the time period we've competed in the Big 12 and including last year. And it's fun to think about what continues to be possible as this league and again the schedule format changes.

Because if you don't want to walk into our gym and watch Brittney Griner and Texas A&M and the University of Texas and Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, and I can go through the list, then you're not truly a fan of basketball, because this is incredible stuff going on. And a lot of it is going to go on in Manhattan, Kansas.

Q. You were talking about the changes and the adjustments to the league. Does it make it more difficult for you to be able to prepare for a league schedule knowing the sense of uncertainty and being able to think a couple of moves ahead?

COACH PATTERSON: No. You know, I think we deal very much in the immediate, the next game. I mean, we're headed into this season knowing what is ahead of us. There's no ambiguity for any of us that do this job.

We know the challenge is great. And I know exactly who we're going to play and what we're going to face, and the schedule is a tremendous, enormous challenge.

But it is what it is, and we're proud of competing in what I think is America's best women's basketball conference. And we look forward to the challenge, and we're here to measure ourselves against it day in and day out. And there's no ambiguity or uncertainty about that. We know what's ahead.

Q. A lot of times you get to this point before a season and you've got some new players that you're really excited about, and a little bit of uncertainty with all that. You've got to a large degree pretty much the same base of players coming back. How much of an advantage does that give you at this point that you know what you've got; that these ladies have played together for a while and really

know one another?

COACH PATTERSON: I feel good about a core of four players that are walking into the gym every day for and with us. And we're never a program that is extremely deep. So to have that solid core of Mariah White and Jalana Childs and Brandy Brown and Brittany Chambers feels good. They're leading strong. They understand the system and how we like to play at Kansas State.

And so that's a very comfortable feeling for a coach when you feel like you've got a nice little core you can walk into the gym with every day.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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