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An Interview With:

MISSOURI COACH ROBIN PINGETON

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Pingeton from Missouri. Welcome. And your opening comments, please.

COACH PINGETON: First of all, I want to thank everybody here today. I appreciate you guys covering women's basketball and the Big 12 and taking the time to come out.

You know, it's hard to believe it's year two already. Time's gone by so fast. And we continue to have a lot of work to do as we build this program at Missouri into somebody that's well respected throughout not only the conference but the country.

And that certainly doesn't happen overnight in this day and age. The game is just elevated so much over the years. It's a challenging task, but I think it's a really exciting journey and it's been -- I've been very pleased with the growth that I have seen in our program and our team over the last 18, 19 months.

A long ways from being satisfied. But very pleased with the growth that we've seen. And I think right now we're in a position where you know we can't necessarily measure it in our wins and losses and that scoreboard. But it's the little victories we see on the court, in the classroom, with the discipline that takes place within our program in the locker room and because of that I've been very pleased.

It's all about laying the foundation and building it from there one day at a time. I'm not a very patient person. I'd like to think I could build Rome in a day but unfortunately it doesn't happen that way.

We know we continue to have a lot of work to do. Things are going very well and we're very encouraged by it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Robin, we heard just a few minutes ago from a guy who had a program that was really struggling and last year won the national championship, Kurt Budke was up there a little bit ago. Won zero games in the conference and the next year was in the NCAA Tournament. You've got a real challenge in front of you obviously, in getting Missouri back to the place you want it to be in women's basketball. Is there a program or a coach that you look at specifically and say: That's the path we want to follow, or are you just trying to do something different from how it's been done before?

COACH PINGETON: Well, I certainly have a lot of respect for those coaches. And they've all been in positions at one time or another where they've built programs.

And I'd probably go back to Bill Fennelly more than anybody in just the way he's built that program at Iowa State, and it's about laying the foundation and doing things the right way. It's somebody I can relate to, because obviously working with him for three years and with him and somebody I know a little more on a personal level, but I certainly respect what other coaches have done in their programs.

But I also think, at the same token, every program's unique and different in the program that you inherit and the challenges that you have. And I think, you know, every season is its own unique journey and there's a process. You gotta coach with your own personality, your staff's personality.

And so everybody has a different way of doing things. But I know that it's -- to do it the right way it takes some time. It's not easy. It's not easy in this league. It's a very challenging opportunity for us.

And somebody asked me the other day if I was overwhelmed by the challenge. And I'm absolutely not. I'm encouraged by it. And I think it's a great opportunity to make an impact not only within our program but within our athletic department, within our university.

Q. If memory serves, during the Big 12

Tournament, back in March, you mentioned that Christine Flores is maybe your team's hardest worker. What evidence have you seen of that in the offseason in terms of her, in terms of her training regimen and what do you expect of her as an upperclassman to help make this a competitive basketball team?

COACH PINGETON: Well, I think a big part of the challenge that we had with our players, and Christine being one of them, was to kind of rekindle that passion and that love for the game. And it doesn't happen overnight either. It happens through a lot of long talks, one-on-one, team talks, and things like that. But the investment, her buying in, I think her finally getting to the point where she understands what an impact player she can be for us and how good she can be.

And I have seen a strong commitment from her in the offseason. I think there's been a lot of growth from a maturity standpoint. She's investing a lot more time into developing her game individually and also has really embraced the opportunity to be a strong leader for our program.

Q. What are kind of the challenges facing Kyley Simmons, a freshman point guard in the Big 12, and what's the strategy of bringing her to Big 12 Media Day? Obviously that's really unusual for a freshman, kind of throwing her into the fire.

COACH PINGETON: Christine Flores is in Mexico right now with the Pan American Games. And we felt like Kyley being a freshman, being in that point guard position, she's going to have to play a lot of minutes for us this year. And we just kind of wanted to throw her out there make her start swimming, get a feel for what this is all about.

She grew up following the Big 12 and is very familiar with a lot of the teams, a lot of the players, but I think it's a lot different when you're sitting here under the bright lights and having a little bit of pressure on you. It doesn't even compare to what's about to happen in the next couple of months. But just trying to get her as acclimated as we can with everything. And I think it's probably a little overwhelming at times for her.

She's going to have to carry a heavy, heavy load this year. But that's the kind of kid she is. And I think as you guys get to know her over the next several years, you'll find what a fighter she is, pretty determined young lady, and I think really is excited about embracing the opportunity to help build our program at Missouri.

Q. I know you're in a tough position, can't really say much about what could happen, conference affiliation-wise, but have you had to prepare or look at recruiting strategies in a different way based on if you're going to leave the Big 12?

COACH PINGETON: Well, you know it's interesting, and maybe if our program was in a little bit different situation we would. But we have so much work to do right now with our current team that we can't afford to look even a day or a week or even a month ahead. We've continued to put our blinders on and stay focused on building our team and continuing to challenge our players, and that's really where we're at right now with everything.

I think we're all anxious to find out what direction all this conference realignment goes, but I can tell you this: I know Chancellor Deaton and our athletic director, Mike Alden, have worked tirelessly at trying to work through all the layers of what's in place. And I believe with all my heart they're going to put us in a position to be successful as a university.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.
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