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An Interview With:

TEXAS TECH KRISTY CURRY

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We're now joined by Coach Kristy Curry from Texas Tech University. Thoughts about the upcoming season.

COACH CURRY: We are eager to build and turning the corner and getting to the NCAA Tournament and take that next step forward.

I really like our two seniors, their leadership and their character, in Jordan Barncastle and Kierra Mallard. I think they've worked extremely hard. They've played a big part the last three seasons in us continuing to improve as a program.

I love our five juniors that surround those two seniors. Our point guard, Monique Smalls, and Casey Morris in our back court, and Christine Hyde, a young lady that I think has an opportunity to be one of the most improved players in our league this year. Mary Bokenkamp. Chynna Brown, Sixth Man of the Year.

Those seven players have played a big part in us continuing to improve. And I know that we feel like the one area of improvement that has to happen is for us to be more consistent, night in, night out. Where we were 8-8 a year ago, how can we continue to improve that total; 22 wins a year ago, how can we improve that.

That comes from being more consistent night in, night out, from our accountability, with doing the little things that make a big difference every day, to our belief that we can take that next step. So we are excited.

We had day 15 of practice yesterday. We love the new rule that you can start 30 out of 40 days from your first playing date. So it's allowed us to take some time to give them some days off and not sprint so fast and so hard for three weeks before your first opener.

And I love what this team is about and who they're trying to become every day. And we feel

like there are a few little things we can do to take that next step, and we're excited.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. At the time, obviously, that six-game stretch from the end of January to the beginning of February was tough for you guys to handle, but now being a year removed from that and the experience that had, how do you feel like that's going to benefit your team this year having gone through that?

COACH CURRY: I think it's going to hopefully help us to continue to realize that our character has to continue to grow; that when tough times happen, that tough people rise above those.

And I think our kids showed a lot of character down the stretch after that. And obviously you don't make excuses, but we had a couple of personal tragedies that a couple of our kids went through at that time and had to leave our program for a couple of days and come back and forth.

And it was tough. But again there are no excuses, and our kids really responded down the stretch when we needed to the most.

Hopefully -- again, it comes back to consistency and taking those next steps and being more consistent.

Q. Doesn't consistency come with some continuity of players? And it seems like you have that this year with the amount of people you have coming back and the big roles those people play.

COACH CURRY: I think it definitely does. Not only comes with more experience but comes with more talent. Obviously the talent on the floor, but the kind of people they are off the floor. It's been a combination of factors, in our experience, in our talent level, our success academically.

I believe there's so much that affects 94 feet with our program growing and becoming better. Certainly all of those areas have improved.

Q. Could you just talk about Kierra and

what she brings you? Especially seems like the Big 12 is defined by players in the front court. She's given up a couple of inches to some of the top players in the league, but what has she meant to your program and what are you looking for from her this year?

COACH CURRY: There's no question that she's been a lot of the reason why we've been able to take the next steps in getting back to the NCAA Tournament.

I'm not sure I've ever coached a player that I've been more proud to see their growth, both on the floor, in the classroom, and community, than Kierra. She obviously is a freshman, had a lot on her shoulders and had to come in and play major minutes, which is what every true freshman wants to do.

Her sophomore year she obviously had some struggles. Last season she continued to grow. And her work ethic. Her consistency in practice.

I'm telling you what, folks, there's not anybody that's working any harder at Texas Tech than Kierra right now. As she works, that's going to make our team an awful lot better. So her consistency day in and day out in practice and off the floor, her maturity level. I'm not sure I've seen anybody mature so much like Kierra has, and I'm really proud of her.

I think she's going to have a breakout year. It's intriguing to me she's not even mentioned as honorable mention, which is just astounding to me. It's absolutely a joke. And I think she's going to prove a point this year with that.

Q. You mentioned the next step. After making the NCAA, after the progress last year, what is the next step for you guys?

COACH CURRY: I think we feel we can compete for a Big 12 title. We feel we're obviously in that underdog role. We feel we can take the next steps forward and compete for a Final Four. I think if you coach and play and your goals are any less than that, you're going to get less than that.

We want to continue to grow, continue to improve, whether it's daily in recruiting or whatever it might be.

We're excited in taking the next steps and feel we can be that one team that surprises a lot of folks this year with our experience, and we feel like we have a lot of balance across the board.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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