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An Interview With:

OKLAHOMA COACH LON KRUGER

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by coach Lon Kruger from Oklahoma. Coach, welcome.

COACH KRUGER: Great to be here. Excited that everyone in the country is at this time of the year. It's a great time of the year. I think for a coach, the first two or three weeks of practice might be the most enjoyable, because you see guys coming together, especially on the first-year situation like we're in, get to know the guys a little bit better and see them develop individually and meshing together as a group.

And of course guys are very enthusiastic. They've worked hard in preseason. They're anxious to have a good basketball team. Their effort has demonstrated that. So we got to work to get better every day and make progress every day and improve the starting point every day, and the guys have done that through the first four or five days of practice.

Excited about what lies ahead. Know it's a great league, great challenge anytime you line up in the Big 12. You know it's going to be extremely difficult and our guys are anxious to line up and challenge themselves. Looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Just wanted to get your thoughts on coming back to your big eight roots, returning to the league, sort of, in a way and getting back here?

COACH KRUGER: I've referred to it as the Big Eight several times by mistake. But it is back to the roots. Growing up just a few miles down the road here from Kansas City, feels very much like coming back home. People have been great and a lot of family still in the Silver

Lake-Topeka area. So anxious to have an opportunity to see them much more frequently.

A lot like coming back home. And even though the conference has changed and it appears to be continuing to change, feels great. And excited about it.

Q. Is basketball in this area now you think stronger than it was when you last coached at K-State?

COACH KRUGER: I think it probably is when you consider the national scale of it all. Know every league in the country is always kind of vying for that position of being a basketball conference, one of the better basketball conferences in the country.

I know back when we were in the big eight we were working to gain more national exposure. Every league I think continues to do that year in and year out. And the best basketball conference seems to rotate around a little bit and four or five different leagues in the country are always competing for that place on the mantel, but the league is really good considering the quality of players that have gone through and the quality of coaching in the league. It's very good and highly respected by everyone in the country.

Q. This is a program that you're getting into that's obviously had a lot of historical excellence, but they've been struggling over the last few years. Could you kind of describe how large you think the challenge of getting Oklahoma back to where you want it to be is and how confident you and your players are about getting that achieved?

COACH KRUGER: The challenge is big in every program to get to where you want to be. We haven't won the last couple of years. Just three years ago they were playing in a game to go to the Final Four. So it's not really that far removed. We've had great tradition, great coaches. Players have gone through the University of Oklahoma, and our guys understand that. And they understand that there's a lot of pride and they're

responsible for doing whatever we can as a group to regain that and get back to that level.

And, again, it's a case of not worrying too much about what's down the road a long ways, but just controlling what you can every day and lining up every day and investing everything you possibly can.

And not only in what you do but in each other as teammates and as a program. And our guys are gaining a sense of that responsibility. And they're sincere about lining up and trying to take care of it.

Q. Can you talk about the Mississippi State transfer, Osby is that how he pronounces it?

COACH KRUGER: It is.

Q. He was a highly rated kid out of high school. Just talk about the prospects of him?

COACH KRUGER: From day one, he's been a terrific worker. Starts there. His attitude about getting better and being a good player is very good. He's a good leader.

He's all about the team during the preseason work he was one of the guys that worked really, really hard every day. And he's pretty versatile on the court. He'll play a little bit more of a power forward inside/outside.

For us we're not a big group so Ro is a big guy we've got. He's got to move out on the floor and face up, play like a perimeter guy, but he's also strong and can post up inside. We need him to rebound the ball very well for us. Again, we don't have a lot of size.

You need your better athletes to get after it pretty aggressively on the boards and Ro will do that.

Q. What do you think it's going to be like going up against your alma mater twice a year?

COACH KRUGER: It will be a little bit different for sure. Big fan of Kansas State. Obviously Frank has done just a terrific job in getting that program back to the national level and really proud of that as an alum. We have had a chance to play Kansas State the last two or three times over the last few years. And it's different when you're in the same league and we haven't played them in Manhattan. So that will be a little different going back to Manhattan for sure.

But be pulling for Kansas State every time they play, just like we always have, with the

exception of a few nights now, but a big fan of what Frank is doing there.

Q. You mention Osby has been a terrific worker for you, leader on the court. Can you elaborate as to leaders who have stuck out to you in practice, guys you're expecting to lead the team on the floor and contribute more than they might think they can this season?

COACH KRUGER: Really, the leadership has come from several different people. I don't know that there's one person that just obviously steps out and vocally leads every day in practice. But those guys you might expect in addition to Ro. You've got Drew Fitzgerald, leading scorer, and Cam Clark and Steven Pledger, and Carl Blair who were there last year and played a lot of minutes really have collectively done it in terms of leadership. And their effort's been great, as you know, from being at practice every day.

So excited about the group, about their effort and their willingness to work hard.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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