

October 20, 2011



An Interview With:

TEXAS COACH RICK BARNES

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by coach Rick Barnes from Texas. Coach, your thoughts about the upcoming season.

COACH BARNES: It's season, another team. We start this year with three players coming back from last year's group in terms of J'Covan Brown and Clint Chapman and Alexis Wangmene and, we've added six recruited scholarship players, so we have basically nine scholarship recruited players, two walk-ons that we gave scholarships to because of their loyalty and commitment to the program.

And we've been at it now a couple of days and I do like the way that these guys have competed, the way they're going after it. We've got to certainly making them understand at this point in time how hard you've got to play day in and day out, practice day in and day out really hard.

But up to this point I've been really pleased with that. And by the time it's done, we're going to be okay.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. When you have a situation like this with the number of newcomers, is it more of a teaching preseason than usual for you?

COACH BARNES: It is. And I told the coaches going in -- and I said it once yesterday, I've probably said it five times -- that we're going to get good at something. At least one thing. I don't know what that's going to be yet. But they would tell you right now they would think it's probably going to be defense because we're doing a lot of teaching.

I've got a great coaching staff. And we're stopping a lot, talking, and along the ways of doing that, we're also, I think, probably trying to make them understand the little things, you know, the effort, the body language, when things aren't going

well, when we're correcting them because we are doing a lot of correcting.

So it's a lot of the little things, the details that have to be taken care of. But there's no doubt there's a lot of teaching going on right now, and we haven't -- we're not going to be a team that will probably -- I think we'll be a very simple team in terms of what we do on both ends of the floor. But whatever it is, like I said, we're going to be good at something.

And we hope that it's playing defense and rebounding the ball and then taking care of the ball on the other end.

Q. It didn't get talked about a lot but in the championship game last year, it seemed like J'Covan Brown came in and contributed a lot for you, especially on defense. Can you talk a bit about how his role will be expanding this season, and what you get out of him?

COACH BARNES: He's really improved. He has gotten better. And he's the kind of player that has made coaching fun because you see where he started, where he came in, where he's gotten better in every area.

He's had a great offseason. He's got himself in the best shape he's ever been in. There's no doubt he will -- he's emerged as the leader of this team.

And we know he can score. He's going to -- we're going to count on him to score. He's going to be a marked man wherever we go play; people are going to try to take it away from him. So he's going to have to work and we've talked to him a lot about his conditioning, taking care of himself all the time, because he's going to play a lot of minutes.

We're also going to have to -- like it was actually yesterday he tweaked his ankle a little bit, and we just kept him out of practice because it's important that we learn to play without him sometimes, too.

I've probably only been in one situation that I can remember where maybe we're going to count on a guy as much as we're going to count on

him to score and that was when I was at Providence with Eric Murdock and he led the league in scoring.

And but we actually one day a week wouldn't let Eric practice so we could learn to play without him in case something did happen. And we also wanted to rest him because we were counting on him.

But J'Covan loves to compete. He's a very smart player. But he will be a marked man this year, there's no question about that.

Q. There's been a lot of moving around in the Big 12. Last year and again this year there were some people that were predicting the demise of the league, which thankfully hasn't happened. I was just wondering, do you know of any instances where rival, schools in rival leagues use that as a recruiting ploy, saying telling kids why do you want to go to this Big 12 school; you don't even know what league you're going to be in?

COACH BARNES: I've never ever thought that the Big 12 would ever go away. I think we've got the best athletic director in the country. And from day one, when it started the talk, of all this expansion started years ago, we met as a staff, an athletic staff, and DeLoss made it clear that his number one goal was to always keep the Big 12.

And with that said, there's no question at the University of Texas we could have gone anywhere we wanted to go. But his goal, regardless of what anybody might say, has been to keep that league together.

The sad part about it -- because this is a great league. We had a great league, and we're going to continue to have a great league, because I think the core people that are committed to this league will keep it that way. And the sad fact is that egos get involved and I've never understood, because I think every team in this league, the ones that are in it, the ones that have left, have something to be proud of.

And I don't think there's anything wrong with being who you are. And, again, we all are competing for the same thing, but I do think when you really get right down to it, got down to a matter of egos, but I'm really excited that we're in the Big 12.

It's not going anywhere. It's here. So if people think that it's -- what I want more than anybody is -- anything is we want teams that are going to be here. We go through -- we talked about recruiting, we tell people all the time we want

people that want to be here because we've got something special. And I think that about our league.

I think we've got a special league. And, believe me, if somebody wants to leave, let them leave, and there will be other people that will want to be a part of it if we choose to do that.

Q. Coach, good freshman class coming in, could you talk about their expectations what impact they could have on the team?

COACH BARNES: We've always set the bar high at Texas. We're not going to change that. And we've told those guys that they came to the University of Texas because, you know, where our program has been, and we still want more. There's no question.

We want more. But we've got a group of guys that right now they probably aren't quite sure what they got themselves into, it's kind of what it's like the first day, couple of days, couple weeks of practice.

But, again, the expectation for all of them are extremely high, because they're going to have to play. And they're going to have to get out there and go after it. And like I was saying earlier, they've shown that they're willing to compete and they want to get themselves improved as individual players.

But we're going to need every one of them.

Q. Wanted to get your thoughts on playing Kansas twice this year?

COACH BARNES: Well, someone asked me back there about a rivalry, what causes rivalries, and my comment was that I think what creates rivalries is competition at the highest level. And I think you go back over the last -- you know, this is my 14th year in the league.

Kansas has set an extremely high standard for basketball, certainly, in this league. And from the time that I was hired at the University of Texas, you know, DeLoss Dodds made a commitment to help get Texas to the highest level.

But what makes rivalries is a consistently competitive situation played well at a very high level. And that's what I think the Kansas/Texas game has been and we've talked about in the past and kidded about maybe even playing a non-league game, because we think that Texas/Kansas playing twice is -- I know our fans are excited about it. We've always enjoyed coming

to play up here because it's one of the great places to play.

You want to win, obviously. And we were fortunate to do that last year. But I think it's going to be -- I think it has been and I think it will even get better with being one of the best rivalries in college basketball.

Q. With the reliance being so much about freshmen this year, can you talk about the balance between pressuring your opponent on both sides of the floor and also what your young guys are capable of and not overextending where they're at?

COACH BARNES: Well, I do think we've got the ability to pressure them because we've got some quickness and we've got some guys I think that can get down and guard, but the key is going to be teaching them how to do it without fouling. That's going to be a major thing, and I've probably harped on that more yesterday and there's a fine line between playing hard and playing with some intelligence.

You want guys to play hard. But oftentimes I think that young players mistake activity for achievement. And just a simple case of learning how to stay in front of the basketball. You can get out there, but if you get out there too quick and somebody goes by you, you're not getting the job done.

But we're going to have to teach them to be a smart defensive team, and we can get small. We can play a lot of different ways, and we've got some interchangeable parts that we're going to do.

And we're working on some of those things. But, again, we've got to teach this team to be a smart team. And I do think we'll be in a lot of close basketball games. We're going to have to work really hard at being able to get a stop in the closing minutes.

We're going to have to be able to find a way to find a way to score, especially when they're probably really trying to work hard to take a guy like J'Covan Brown out of the offense. So along with teaching these guys how to work, we're going to have to teach them, again, how to play.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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