

**October 15, 2014**



An Interview With:

## **COACH BOB HUGGINS**

THE MODERATOR: Your thoughts on the upcoming season.

COACH HUGGINS: It can't get here soon enough. We're whatever we are, a couple weeks into practice, and it starts to get mundane and even boring for coaches. We've got a scrimmage coming up which we're looking forward to.

I like our team. I like the enthusiasm they bring every day. I think we're finally maybe going to try to guard somebody, which would be something new. Actually, maybe try to run to the rim and shoot a layup.

We've been kind of like your dog, you know, with the electric fence. We run right to that three and kind of stop right there. So we're going to actually try to run in past the three-point line this year and see if that works.

**Q. Coach, when you talk about in what ways has Gary Brown matured in his time with the program, and what do you expect of him as a senior in terms of leadership and so forth?**

COACH HUGGINS: Well, I think Gary's always brought a lot of enthusiasm and toughness. Gary is kind of like a dog chasing a bone. I mean, wherever the ball was, he chased it and with total disregard for where his man was, but he'd always made some plays and stole the ball. So I guess that was okay.

It's just hard to do that at this level, and I think he's become much more disciplined at the defensive end. I think he's become much more disciplined at the offensive end. He kind of understands kind of what he can and can't do. I think he's done a much, much better job of accentuating the positive.

**Q. Bob, where do you want to see Juwan's game go this year?**

COACH HUGGINS: I kind of want him to do the same thing he did a year ago. I just like to get the same kind of production with not as many minutes. I think he wore down a little bit at the end of the year playing all those minutes. I'd like to be able to rest him some more, have him fresher at the end of games, I think.

And I talked to him about this. I think there were times where he was just spent at the end of games. Where we really needed him sometimes to go and get the ball, he just couldn't. I think, if we could keep him fresher, we want the ball in his hands, obviously, at the end of games. He's a guy that can make free throws down the stretch, and he's a guy that's not going to turn it over.

So we want to rest him more but still get the same kind of production from him. I think he's shooting the ball so much better. I don't know if he's shooting it better. I think he's shooting with so much more confidence. He could shoot it last year. He just, I don't think, had enough confidence to do so. But he's put a tremendous amount of time in the gym and worked really hard at it, which, I think, has really helped his confidence level.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach? We're not going to let him off that easy?

COACH HUGGINS: After Rick Barnes, they already figured everything out. I spent five minutes with Rick, and I feel smarter.

**Q. Last year you came with the cardigan, this year with the bow tie, a nod to Gordon Gee? Or is this a fashion statement?**

COACH HUGGINS: A tribute to our president, yeah. It just kind of seemed like the right thing to do. And I'd kind of like to keep you guessing. I don't really -- I mean, I don't want people to think they've figured me out yet.

THE MODERATOR: Any more basketball questions for coach?

COACH HUGGINS: I appreciate you being concerned about my wardrobe, though.

**Q. A lot of players down low last year**

**were brand new to the program, guys who you had to count on simply because you needed them. To see Devin Williams coming back this year, Brandon Watkins, what do they bring this year that maybe they weren't capable of last year being forced in there?**

COACH HUGGINS: We're certainly hoping that Devin's a guy that we can throw the ball to that can score it close. I think we basketball being a game of runs, to try to stop runs, and we obviously couldn't do that at the defensive end. So we just tried to keep pace offensively, and when we started missing shots that we really didn't have, there was no second option.

I think Devin spent a great deal of time this summer with K.J., Kevin Jones, and I don't think anybody has ever maximized their potential better than what Kevin Jones did and really learned how to use his body and shield people off the ball with his body and being able to score it around the rim by just using those big shoulders.

I think Devin has made tremendous progress in that area. I think he scores the ball so much better around the basket. It's nice when you can throw it close and kind of stop the bleeding, so to speak, when people are making runs. I think Dev can do that for us.

And Brandon's worked really hard on -- you know, you want him to have a go to, something that they can go to, and he's worked really hard on being able to jump hook the ball with either hand. He's a guy that you probably -- he's just not as strong as Devin yet. So he loses post position a little easier. But when he catches it there, he scores it at a very high rate because of his ability to -- his length and then ability to throw that jump hook.

It's a good thing you two guys are here. I'd feel like a lost soul. I do anyway.

**Q. In what ways do you feel like your nonconference schedule prepares you to play in a league that some of your colleagues are saying is arguably one of the country's best?**

COACH HUGGINS: I don't know the answer to that. I've done this for a long time, and I think there's been a time where we've over scheduled, and I think there's times when we've under scheduled. I think the problem is we do the schedule a little bit ahead. Like I would probably have done some different things after having two weeks of practice than what I did last year when we were trying to make the schedule.

I think there's times when you ought to back off a little bit. You have young guys like we had a year ago, to try to develop some confidence. And there's other times where you have veterans and you need to consistently challenge them.

I'm just making all that up because I really don't know what to say. I appreciate your writing it down, though. And try to write it like I really did know what I was talking about, but I really don't. I don't know that there's really a good answer sometimes.

Honestly, you look at some of those teams that they end up going a long way in the tournament, and they play just a horrendous nonconference schedule. Everybody says it makes you better. It only makes you better if you win.

**Q. Coach, going back a couple of years where you had so many true freshmen in Gary Brown's class, and now you have a lot of new players, but a lot of them have played at least college basketball before. How different is this transition compared to that, when these guys should have a little bit better understanding of what will be expected of them?**

COACH HUGGINS: Well, obviously, I hope we're a whole lot better. A lot of it is having people who kind of fit together. I think this group really does. They seemingly like each other a lot. As I said earlier, they brought great enthusiasm, I think, to every practice, which makes it a lot more fun. I think everybody enjoys it more. I certainly enjoy it more.

We've spent a lot of time trying to explain to them that it's hard to coach effort and basketball at the same time. If you're constantly coaching effort, you don't coach a lot of basketball. I think to this point their effort's been pretty good and we've been able to actually go in and coach basketball, which is seemingly what they're supposed to want and certainly what we want to do.

So we're way ahead in that area. And then having a guy like Jonathan Holton who just -- I don't know that I've had many people who have the enthusiasm that he has on a day-to-day basis. He just comes in every day just excited to play, loves to play. And he's a guy that you don't have to run things for him to score.

A lot of guys -- Joe Alexander had a great year for us, but we had to run things for Joe. I think Jonathan's a guy who can score the ball

without running plays for him. He's a guy who's going to get it off the glass. He's going to get it in transition. He's going to make open shots. And he's a guy that you don't have to say this is Jonathan's play for him to score, which is kind of refreshing. Seemingly in an era where everybody wants to catch it and dribble it 74 times before they pass it, he doesn't do that.

He's a guy that I think at some point in time we're going to have to tell him to go ahead and try to look to score more. We can throw it to him in the post, and he passes it out of the post to open people. He's just -- he's not your typical modern day kind of guy. He's kind of a throwback kind of guy, which is fun.

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