

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Tubby Smith

Texas Tech Red Raiders



THE MODERATOR: Texas Tech coach Tubby Smith, coach, welcome, and your thoughts about the upcoming season?

COACH SMITH: Well, good morning. We're excited about this coming season as we usually are. It's doing what we love to do. We've got a great group of kids returning. It will still be a very young team, but we have improved a lot.

Q. What is the biggest area of improvement you've seen in your five sophomores so far?

COACH SMITH: Well, strength. Obviously just a year of conditioning and weight training. I think that's helping. The experience of playing in the Big 12, and I think the foreign tour we took helps us realize that their maturity level, that they've improved in all areas pretty much.

Q. We just heard Curtis Shaw talk a bunch about improving the game, making it more watchable, that sort of thing. There's been some talk about schedule shifts, maybe trying to push things back a little bit and not compete as much against football. What is your thoughts on any of that as it relates to scheduling specifically?

COACH SMITH: Well, everything is evolving. It's always changing, and we have to change with the times. There was talk about changing the seasons years ago because it's a two-semester sport that crosses over into -- and you always want to think about the student-athletes when we make these decisions.

I think the rule changes that they want to implement are to help to improve the game, speed the game up some, but also to give the players more freedom to express themselves and play the game the way we wanted to see it played. Because we are in an entertainment field, as well as an educational field, so we know that.

But all of the things that they're trying to explore or change should be -- the student-athletes well-being should be kept in mind, and we're heading in the right direction in that regard.

Q. What is the biggest challenge for you in trying to

rebuild this program in such a talented league?

COACH SMITH: Well, believing. When you've struggled so long to win, like we have at Texas Tech, just changing the mindset and the culture. Although we have great fans and great student support on our campus, and in Lubbock in general, there are a lot of great fans, we still have to continue to grow the program when it comes to recruiting to keep improving, whether it's facilities or other areas. We know that the competition is stiff no matter where in trying to influence or persuade down the middle to attend the university.

But always, Kirby Hocutt, our AD, and Duane Nellis, our president -- our school is growing. We have the largest freshman class we've ever had, over 35,000 students. All those things are pointing us in the right direction.

I think in basketball in particular, men's basketball, we're on the right track. We have the right kids on board. It's just a matter of time and continuous improvement from the skillset.

It helped with access to the players last summer. We went on a foreign tour. Those things have been beneficial. So I think it's going to be much more competitive this year.

Q. Earlier this year you were part of a group of coaches who developed a new association for minority hirings. I wonder if you can give us an update six months on about how that is going. Also, by my count, I think more minority coaches lost their jobs and left their jobs that were hired again this season. Just your thoughts on that trend?

COACH SMITH: Well, it used to be the BCA, the Black Coaches Administration, which I'm proud I was one of the charter members when we first started it back in '85, '86, and it made a difference. There were a lot of changes taking place. There were very few African-American or minority coaches at the Division 1 level. Assistant coaches at the time, I was an assistant coach at Virginia Commonwealth University at the time. It was a little uneasy.

But as far as what we were trying to achieve, I think John Thompson, Nolan Richardson, and Don Cherry

were guys that were pioneers and kind of paved the way for many of us native African or minority coaches. So we want to continue that trend.

I know the NCAA has programs to try to -- the NBA, the NFL, there are a lot of programs that have been implemented to help minority coaches prepare themselves, and that's where this program is, preparation, and preparing and addressing some of the issues that may affect our student-athletes. Not so much hiring or firing of coaches, because we know it's more than just a dollar. There is a lot that goes into those circumstances and those situations. But you have to be able to have a voice and be able to speak for -- that's what this organization is about.

Norvell and Ricky Lefft are two people that are heading up this program. We have a number of coaches that have joined. So I think it's going to be beneficial. It's still in the infancy stage and it's going to take some time to address a lot of issues, especially the most important one that we're trying to address is how the new academic eligibility and standards will affect minority students.