

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH STEVE DONAHUE

THE MODERATOR: We have Steve Donahue from Boston College.

Steve, you have a rare opportunity this year. You get to coach five returning starters. Obviously the game of college basketball has changed a lot. Talk about that opportunity.

COACH DONAHUE: I think obviously it's a very unique situation in this day and age, especially high major basketball, where you can bring in a group of kids as freshmen, play them a lot, lose, go through some values, build on that, bring in a couple more guys, then have the opportunity to reward your team hopefully with all the hard work and perseverance, experience that they gain.

Hopefully you have a great season based on all the things you worked on.

An opportunity that wouldn't have presented itself unless we actually started them as freshmen, as we did.

THE MODERATOR: Is it hard to have the long view?

COACH DONAHUE: I've unfortunately coached some really bad teams in my day. My experience at Cornell taught me a lot. I never really judge my teams on wins and losses. That's kind of coach's speak. But I don't. I do it on quality of growth. That means individually, that means collectively, physically, mentally.

I just thought when I got this job, I talked to my AD, I said, We got a chance to be okay the first year. We had a really good year. Tied for fourth. But years two and three are going to be building. Are you with me on that? Sure. Okay, let's go.

I think my experience, as I said, at Cornell helped me prepare for that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Am I right in thinking that you had all five starters back in 2010 at Cornell? Talk about anything you draw off that experience this year.

COACH DONAHUE: We had five starters back. Very similar scenarios in how we built that, what we did here.

I was very fortunate. I know it's crazy. There was a clean cut from our program that the former regime had after one year. At the time, in April of that year, I had one scholarship player on campus, one player. Nine guys were coming. I think that was a good thing, to be quite honest. We could do what we did at Cornell, have veteran guys work together, play together.

My experience told me that after about 50 college games, if you get a kid who can play, start 30 minutes, go through 50 games, early in their career, after I think you get a kid who figures it out. I think that's what you saw when we won five out of seven at the end. You saw a group that really understood what they were in for every night.

They understood what to expect. I thought you saw a team that was able to succeed once they figured that all out.

Q. You knew what Big East basketball was like. Coming to the ACC, is there a different brand of basketball down here? Talk about the challenge of making that transition.

COACH DONAHUE: Obviously for me personally, dramatically different play from Ivy League. I was 20 years in the Ivy League.

Syracuse, I think they are in for an eye-opening experience. The basketball is dramatically different, not because it's in the south, but just because of the programs.

That's the great thing about college basketball, unlike the NBA, teams are dramatically different. The style of play in this league is dramatically different than the grind-it-out physicality of the Big East. Doesn't mean they're

not going to be successful, it's just different. A different flow to the game.

I think our league is very unique in that all the places are on campus as opposed to the Big East where you're going to Madison Square Garden, Verizon Center, Wells Fargo, the dome. I think the home court is a huge advantage. I think those are things that those three schools are going to see as eye-opening.

Q. We had Ryan and Olivier in here this morning. Break down their games, how they've developed.

COACH DONAHUE: Both have done a terrific job since they arrived on campus. How we end up with those two guys, they weren't finished products in high school. Ryan was probably overlooked, probably a little heavy, not the most athletic guy coming out of high school. Basically he's transformed his body. Now you see a kid who I think overachieved dramatically because of his physical limitations. That's because he's young, going against great athletes. He's physically fit, older, stronger. He has that knack of scoring the basketball. He has different ways of scoring. He rebounds, has an ability to track the ball down that you can't teach.

Olivier, the biggest thing coming into college basketball, he's never been asked to score. He's always been a kid that tried to fit in. His AAU, high school, he didn't know if he had the ability to really score. When he was asked to score last year, he's got a special ability to score the basketball in different ways, and he works at it. As hard a worker that I've ever coached on his individual game.

When you get a kid that's that talented and works at it, I think that's what you saw in Olivier.

Q. Obviously with the five starters back, expectations are going to be pretty high out there. Now you have Syracuse, Pitt and Notre Dame coming in to make it harder. Is it like, Not this year?

COACH DONAHUE: I think it's a great thing for us. I think it's a great thing for Boston College to have even a better league. If you look at our non-league schedule, I think we have arguably the best non-league schedule in the country. We're playing five true road games, another four neutral games. No one does that. We have only three guarantee games.

My feeling is that we can't afford to be at BC, play a lot of average to mediocre teams, go

12-2, then have a triple-digit RPI and expect to win 13 games in this league.

We're going to have to somehow win big games November, December, January and February knowing that we're going to lose a lot as well. That's the whole game now. The NCAA tournament is the RPI Invitational.

I invite better teams in our league, I really do. Gives you more opportunities to win big games, improve your RPI, make an impact on the Selection Committee.

Q. Was there a game during the course of the season last year where you saw your guys turn a corner and you started to feel the things you were imparting on them was being absorbed in the proper fashion?

COACH DONAHUE: Cut it in half. The pre-season still felt like the year before. We struggled. We lose to Bryant. Still not feeling like we're there.

We go into the league and we play NC State, if you remember, really well, a very talented team. Then from that point on, I say we're going to be fine. We played Duke and Miami to one-point losses at home. We beat a really good Virginia team with a buzzer-beater down 12. I think that day is when I probably felt the best about my team, where we were heading. Felt really good about fighting through adversity, beating a good team, down by 12. I think that's probably the moment that it really hit me.

Q. A moment ago you said to take the league out of it, this new conference is good for BC. Talk about the conference as a whole. Does this have the potential to be what SEC is to college football, be the dominant conference year in and year out?

COACH DONAHUE: I think it definitely has the potential. I say this 'cause I think we all have to do a very good job in our non-conference. I'm trying to do my part for the league. I think we should all schedule up. Everybody's situation's different. Job security, all that.

That being said, if we do that, I think we can be the most dominant amateur athletic conference that's ever been put together. No one has put this type of résumé together. Hall of Fame coaches, national championships, incredible traditional power basketball programs. Never been put together like this.

No one has been bad. This is not against the Big East when they got 11 bids. There's five bad teams in that league, traditional bad teams for 20 years. Everybody in this league has been to the tournament since 2007. There's no bad program.

We have a great opportunity to set the bar that's never been set before.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck on a great season.

COACH DONAHUE: Thank you.

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An interview with:

COACH BRAD BROWNELL

JEFF FISCHER: We have Brad Brownell, head coach of the Clemson Tigers.

Looking ahead to the season, let's look at what you have. You lost a big man up front, but you still have some experience. Break down the team and the five you'll have on the floor.

COACH BROWNELL: I don't know if I can give you a starting lineup. Certainly feel good about K.J. McDaniels. Worked hard the last couple years to make himself into a high-level player, terrific athlete, improved shooter, driver.

Jordan Roper, who came with us today, is a guy who played very well for us in Italy. Had a good freshman year. Can shoot the ball from three, very quick. A guy who is kind of going back and forth between a one and a two.

It's Landry Nnoko inside is a guy who is slowly emerging as our starting center right now. He's 6'10", 245. A little inexperienced. Sophomore. Guy who defends pretty well for his position. I feel good about him.

Then we have a bunch of others, Damarcus Harrison, Adonis Filer. Rod Hall is a guy who started a bunch for us last year at point guard, is a very seasoned player in terms of experience, a glue guy that makes other people better.

We have a little bit of experience in the backcourt, very young in the front court.

There's a physicality that you're going to face at this level that you don't see until you actually get to the heart of the ACC night in, night out when you're playing big, strong, athletic players in the front court.

Landry Nnoko, Josh Smith is another sophomore that didn't play a lot more, but at 6'8", 250, has the size physically to bang around in

there. We signed a post player, Ibrahim Djambo, 210, 215, a little thin, but a guy we feel good about. Face-up, stretch four, a little like Milton Jennings, can shoot threes, just needs some experience.

We'll see how it all shakes out during the course of the fall here, as we assemble our team for our first game in November.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions.

Q. Who are you looking for this year to be your leaders on the team?

COACH BROWNELL: Probably our junior class. K.J. McDaniel, Rod Hall are the two guys that come to mind. K.J. in my mind is an encourager, a guy that is very supportive of his teammates, tries to make people feel good. Very supportive.

Rod is a little bit quieter, but a guy who leads by example. Trying to become more vocal. Certainly a tough-minded, physical player that has the respect of our team because of his unselfishness, his smarts, his ability to just grind things out, tough things out.

I think those two guys are probably the guys who are most likely to be considered leaders in our program.

JEFF FISCHER: You did a great job defensively last year possession after possession. Have you seen that from this team this year?

COACH BROWNELL: Certainly I'm concerned with defending the paint and rebounding. When we had two older players in there in Devin and Milt, Devin was a very good rebounder in traffic. He was a guy who could get tough rebounds for you against physical players. Those guys did a good job that way.

I was proud of the way we defended last year. I thought we defended at a pretty high level. Just didn't shoot the ball well enough.

Whether we can defend at the same level, I don't know. I'm optimistic we can. I think the rebounding is a little bit of a cause for concern right now.

JEFF FISCHER: Offensively where have you seen the most development?

COACH BROWNELL: Well, the thing that excites me the most, I think we'll be a better shooting team. We'll make more perimeter shots. We didn't shoot the ball well last year, we didn't shoot free throws well. We put a lot of time in, done extra shooting. We're still doing it. It's what we're going to have to do to be successful this year. We're going to have to make more shots.

We have Devin Coleman that can shoot the ball, that will be very encouraging. Some other guys, Damarcus Harrison is an improving shooter. If those guys are a little more relaxed, comfortable as older players, shoot the ball a little bit better, that's the best way we have an opportunity to improve our offense.

Q. Can you talk about how tough this league is.

COACH BROWNELL: This is going to be a great challenge. The teams that we brought in are great programs, they're not just good teams. Notre Dame, Syracuse and Pitt aren't just good every once in a while, they're good every year. They have established basketball programs with great coaches and they're at schools that are committed to it. They're committed to basketball. They put money into it. Their fans support it. It's important to them. They're good every year.

When you add that with the kind of programs we already have here, it makes for a lot of excitement. It makes this what we all think is the best league in college basketball. You have to be prepared.

I'm very excited about it now. When I'm in the middle of five games out of six on the road, I might not be as excited at some point.

The great thing this league does now it affords you the opportunity to beat top-25 teams every week. You're going to have an opportunity to improve your résumé, to get big wins, to have great teams come into your building and play, exciting games for your fans basically from January to March.

JEFF FISCHER: The lifeblood for a program is recruiting. What impact does the new ACC have on that?

COACH BROWNELL: I think it's positive. I'm a Midwest guy, grew up in Indiana. We've made a conscious effort to recruit the Midwest in the last 18 months or so. I think the opportunity of having Notre Dame and Louisville and Pittsburgh from that area has opened some kids' eyes to the

idea of maybe playing elsewhere. Certainly add Syracuse to the mix, you can talk about northeastern schools. Kids want to challenge themselves against the best. They have an understanding of what's happening in this league. If you can be successful here, you can be successful anywhere.

JEFF FISCHER: We talked about K.J. a bit. You can't really teach shot blocking.

COACH BROWNELL: None of that came from the coaches. He did that all on his own. He's a highlight reel waiting to happen all the time. He's been on the ESPN more on the top 10 list. He's a great leaper, incredible offensive rebounder, runs the floor in transition, blocks shots. What he does you can't coach. He just does it naturally. He's a great physical athlete that's improving his basketball. That's the thing that excites me the most, is his ability to do other things on the basketball court.

Our fans are spoiled with that guy. He provides entertainment all night every night.

JEFF FISCHER: The way you measure the success of this team this year, how are you going to do that.

COACH BROWNELL: I don't know. Everybody is going to look at wins and losses. I need to see how this team grows, how we handle adversity, what individual players on our team make, what kind of strides they make, what kind of identity we begin to develop. This is a group that could be together for a couple years. You want to begin to lay the groundwork with this group for some things that are going to help you in the next couple of years.

I'm going to see how we handle a lot of different things. We haven't talked about a lot of specific goals with our team. We're just trying to work hard, develop a strong identity and a bond together that's going to allow us to be successful moving forward.

JEFF FISCHER: Thank you.

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An interview with:

COACH MIKE KRZYZEWSKI

JEFF FISCHER: I'm joined by Mike Krzyzewski, head coach of Duke.

Start with the fact that you lose a lot of production from last year, but you should be very comfortable with the people coming in to replace those guys.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I was more comfortable with the guys we had last year because I knew what to expect. You had a base of three guys who you knew were going to do really good jobs in Mason, Ryan and Seth.

In saying that, I'm excited about the group that we have. It's going to be a whole new system. The two most talented players we have are guys that have not played a second for our program yet. There's going to have to be a period of adjustment.

I think starting practice early has been good for us, the change. We can evaluate as this thing goes along a little bit. We're all healthy right now. We're trying to work on a new system.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions.

Q. What is the process of getting the complementary players to buy into two guys that haven't played a minute being the focal point of the team?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Probably 'complementary', like a newscast, it's not a complementary part of the 30-minute program. I think it's the best part of the program.

The fact that you have these two guys, and they're very versatile, there's undefined roles out there for guys. In other words, how do I complement, to use that word, these two guys, and sometimes in doing that I become one of the really key players on the team?

Our guys have been really good about it because they recognize the talents of these two kids, in Jabari and Rodney, but they also like them as guys. So it's not like you're just competing against one of them for a position. They're there, and we're going to have three other guys with them. How do you fit into that? How do you adapt?

Like Amile Jefferson has adapted really well. He's actually probably better in that than he would be if we said, You're our center. We won't say that. You're just playing with them. So then he goes to his set of skills instead of trying to be a center, that type of thing.

Quinn Cook has to adapt, Rasheed and these guys, they get along well. We just have to try to figure it out.

Q. Mike Brey, he said you're well-known for your policy of eating your young when it comes to former assistants.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I've never subscribed to that philosophy, unless they're really cooked well (smiling).

You know, Mike obviously is a great friend, part of our family. To see what he's done at Notre Dame makes me feel very proud of him and our program, that we were part of that. A small part. He's been the main part. We were a complementary part to that.

I'd rather not play against Mike, just like Jim Boheim. But our conference puts us in a position where Notre Dame and Duke are going to play. Wow. Syracuse and Duke are going to play. Those are instant rivalries, instant great games. I think that's going to be good for our conference.

JEFF FISCHER: The ACC pre-season poll just came out. Duke with 51 of the 54 first-place votes. Rodney and Jabari both first team ACC pre-season. It speaks to how much respect you've gotten for these two before they have been on the floor for Duke.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, I think it

speaks to a high expectation level. One thing for us this year, it's not based on what you've seen before, it's what you think you're going to see. Whereas some of these things over the years, when you are picked high, you have a lot of guys coming back.

I hope we're able to come close to meeting some of these high expectations. I know our guys want to be able to do that. We'll see.

JEFF FISCHER: Jabari, the pre-season pick for Rookie of the Year in the ACC, as well.

More questions.

Q. You've had a great reputation of having great leaders at Duke over the years. Who are you looking for to be your leaders this year? What do you look for in your leaders?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Well, leadership, even if you name a leader, doesn't mean guys are leaders. You hope they become.

I think in Tyler, he is a leader. He's a guy that fits in perfectly, is a senior, has the respect of everyone else.

I think for Rodney, he has the potential to be a leader. The guys really respect him. But he's never been placed in that role before.

So I think the combination of the two of them can really help us. We're going to need Rodney to emerge even more because he'll be on the court a lot more than Tyler will. There's leadership off the court, there's leadership on the court. Both are really important. We need Rodney to fulfill that leadership on the court. That doesn't mean Tyler won't be there, but he won't be on the court as much as Rodney would be.

Q. You mentioned Coach Boeheim, not wanting to coach against him. Were you hoping maybe he'd call it quits before now? In some way are you looking forward to showing him who is number one?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: Both of those are no's. I'm not interested in showing anybody I'm number one over him. I don't coach for that. I'd like to show our team we'll finish number one, so that's a goal.

No, I hope Jim coaches for 20 more years. I know his wife Julie wants him to coach that long because I know Julie. I know she would like that.

We're best friends. We've known each other for decades. The last eight years we've done together some really neat things for USA Basketball.

Whatever happens on the court, we know that every time we coach against each other right now it will be an historic event with the two winningest coaches going at it at the same time.

I'm sure that we will handle that in a way that will be good for the game, which he's done and I think I've done. At least we've done it most of the time.

JEFF FISCHER: The fans are excited. It's already a sell-out at the Carrier Dome.

Q. You talked about a new system, new players with Rodney and Jabari being the focal point, guys having to adapt to them. For you as a coach, is that a bit of a departure for you?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: It's really what I've done every year. It's just that my team doesn't necessarily need it as drastically as it does this year. I mean, it's really a big change.

But we adapt every year to our personnel. So over the years, the 34 years I've been at Duke, our teams have been different. The last few years, actually number of years, we haven't had the depth of athletic ability that we have on this team. Hopefully this team will develop the skill level that some of the teams we've had that will go along with their athletic ability. If we do, I think we'll be very good.

Q. We were just handed the Player of the Year, Rookie of the Year. Hoping to get a comment on C.J. Fair from you. Talk about his game a little bit, how he helps make Syracuse what it is this season.

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: I end up watching Syracuse a lot because Jim coaches and you cheer for him. So Fair is different. I don't think he has a position. He always comes up big in big games. Looks to me like a guy that the tougher the situation, the better he is.

I was disappointed that he was not able to play for the United States this summer because I thought he'd be a great addition to one of our U.S. teams.

It doesn't surprise me that he's rated that high by everyone. He's one of the better players in the United States. Talking to Jim, I know he feels that he's one of the key components for their success this year.

Q. Talk about all three of the newcomers. Is it exciting from a competition

standpoint to get three high-level programs joining you in the ACC now?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: It's great for our conference. I'm always excited. I didn't need any new additions or anything. I'm excited to coach at Duke no matter how many people we have in the conference.

The fact is that I think it's great for the conference. I think right now we are the best conference. We need to do what we should be doing to make sure we feel that way in January and in April and two years from now. Instead of just saying it, I think we now need to do it. It will be interesting to see how that all develops.

But the potential is here for some greatness. The instant rivalries that are being created as a result of that expansion for basketball in the ACC is remarkable.

Q. Can you talk about what the addition with Coach Brey, Dixon and Boeheim to a league already loaded with great coaches, what does that bring to the league now?

COACH KRZYZEWSKI: It just means three more good coaches. I mean, I think when you have great competition, it makes you better. It will make everybody better. We didn't add three programs that are trying to emerge; we've added three programs - and Louisville next year - that they're there. They have been. They have a tradition of excellence. It's not just about coaching, it's about the program. They expect excellence. It's not somebody joining the conference hoping to succeed. They know how to succeed.

Game in, game out, the conference is going to be tougher. I think it will produce more really good teams and more NCAA teams than we've ever had in the ACC.

JEFF FISCHER: Coach, thank you.

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An interview with:

COACH LEONARD HAMILTON

JEFF FISCHER: We're joined by Florida State head coach Leonard Hamilton.

(Question concerning Sylvia Hatchell.)

COACH HAMILTON: It means an awful lot to me because I've had several scenarios, battles with these types of dreaded diseases in my family. I lost my grandmother to cancer, my father to cancer, my youngest brother Barry, my brother Willie, my mother this past April.

When a friend of mine is in one of those situations, my heart goes out to them. I know the stress it puts on their families and friends and loved ones because I've lived it for a number of years.

My heart goes out to Sylvia. She's loved by anyone. One of the best coaches in the history of women's basketball. We wish her well in this battle. We lift her up in prayers. I'm sure that I along with the Florida State family, people who know here, wish her a very speedy recovery.

JEFF FISCHER: We'll take questions.

Q. When you have someone that you care about that's going through a tough go with a disease, how does that bring everything front and center to you to go off the court and see the bigger picture about life, what truly matters to you?

COACH HAMILTON: I probably live my life all the time and try to teach our players that things are much more important sometimes than just the game of basketball. It's the game of life that is so much more important. The game allows you to be exposed and it teaches you. You have to be aware of that.

Not a whole lot we can do except raise the consciousness of our peers and young people. I think Sylvia was detected as a result of going to

get a health checkup, which is positive from the standpoint that it didn't get a chance to grow a whole lot more because at least it was detected at some earlier stage. We have to encourage that.

We also have to keep working hard to raise money for research so that hopefully in the future we have a cure for it.

JEFF FISCHER: She is as tough and feisty as any coach, man or woman, in the ACC, that is for sure.

Let's talk about the team this year. Give me your sense of what you've seen after a couple weeks of practicing with the guys. They need to fill a big void left by Michael Snaer.

COACH HAMILTON: The biggest void we have to fill now is the gap where we have been on the defensive end and where we were last year. We did a difficult time with our guys understanding defensive principles that we put in place and have been successful with over the last 15 or 20 years. It was having seven first-year players accepting the fundamentals that go along with playing the kind of defense that we played was more challenging than we expected.

On the offensive end, I think we've improved in our potential offensively because the ability of these guys, attack the basket off the dribble. They've all improved the perimeter game. My three big guys have improved tremendously.

I'm encouraged by the skill development of our team. I think the success of this team as I look toward the year will have a lot to do with our maturing, maturation process coming full circle with them being consistent with our defensive principles. They're going to give us tremendous effort, they've shown they're capable of doing that. I think we're going to be much better offensively.

I'm encouraged. It's whether or not we can win it with a sophomore-dominated team. A lot has to do with the maturity and how much progress they make from the mental and emotional standpoint. Physical, we came light-years from where we were last year.

JEFF FISCHER: Do you think they need to get they have to play defense?

COACH HAMILTON: When you take over programs like I have over the number of years, rebuilding projects, I think we've done a good job at Florida State over the last eight years doing that. You don't always get the elite offensive players or elite players, but you have to find a way, something that everybody can do that doesn't necessarily require the quickness, speed or athleticism.

We've tried to develop a defensive scheme that allows us to be successful while we're developing our offensive skills or improving our talent level. Maybe because you're not as talented as someone else doesn't give you an excuse not to be successful.

Now that we're getting better players, we still maintain that same level of defense. It's just that sometimes it's more difficult for a freshman and first-year players to learn that defensive system than it is more experienced players. I think that's what we went through. Hopefully we'll be further along this year and the learning curve won't be the same.

Q. With the newcomers, Syracuse, Pitt, Notre Dame making the transition, can you talk about the identity of ACC basketball, the kind of transition those teams will have to make in order to fit into what this conference is all about?

COACH HAMILTON: In the first place, I don't think there will be much of a transition challenge for those teams. They're well-coached, all have talent. From a basketball standpoint, there are so many more similarities than there are differences.

I think the main thing as I see, what's getting ready to happen, when I say 'we,' I mean me, the coaches, the media, to really understand what has been happening in the ACC.

There has never been a conference of consistent, competitive programs assembled in one conference. North Carolina is the third winningest program in the history, Duke is fourth, Syracuse is five, Louisville is 14, North Carolina State I believe is 25, Pittsburgh might be 49. Along with that, Georgia Tech has played in the Final Four, Wake Forest has played in the Final Four, Virginia has been to the Final Four. Now you're talking about a collection of basketball programs now where every night is going to be exciting.

You're going to have Final Four-type atmospheres in a competitive nature unlike what you've seen. It's going to be elevated to what we've seen in the past because of the nature of those four, with Louisville, coming to our league.

What has happened over the years, I think sometimes the two consistent flagship programs in our league, Duke and Carolina, when they have stumbled against some of the other programs who have been inconsistent, that has been conceived as a negative.

Now it's going to create a competitive scenario. Now the success gets spread around, it's going to elevate the status similar to what happened in the Big East. I think they got more teams in because of the image protected by so many of their programs being rich, traditional programs, some of them basketball only.

I think the new teams bring that aura to our league that is going to make a great conference amazing.

JEFF FISCHER: When we had the guys in here earlier, they talked about the trip to Greece. You had a little smirk there. What were you laughing about?

COACH HAMILTON: I think it was a tremendous educational experience for us from a cultural standpoint, seeing the birthplace of civilization, all the things that happened. It was worthwhile from that standpoint, evaluating their culture, eating their food, adjusting.

But we had an eye-opening experience playing against the Greece national team every day. That was unlike any experience I've ever had. Normally when you go out of the country, you play against some lower-division club teams that you're successful against. That was not the case here. This is their Olympic team. This is their EuroCup team. High level of competitiveness. Obviously it being their national team, preparing for the EuroCup, they didn't want a college team to come in and overshadow them.

The first encounter, we were kind of close because of our athleticism, size. The second encounter, they put us in our place. They showed us how European basketball is played.

Our guys learned from that. They were making six, seven, eight passes in a 24-second shot clock. The third encounter we adjusted. We practiced. We only played one public scrimmage, but had five or six competitive practice sessions that I really thought helped our players learn how

to play, which I really felt was extremely beneficial.

JEFF FISCHEL: You talked about how you exposed them to the culture. They said they resorted to burgers the last few days.

COACH HAMILTON: They enjoyed the food. Those were the kids hamming it up again. I have never eaten such good food in my life. If you take a trip to Greece, you won't starve. Their culture has the most tasty food I've tasted in a while.

JEFF FISCHEL: They also brought up you don't agree on your taste in music.

COACH HAMILTON: Well, see, the only hobby I have is I collect old-school DVDs, a lot of the music that their parents used to listen to. I have a collection of about 500 of them that I can go all the way back to Frankie Valli in 1964 with The Four Seasons, to some of the most modern people you know. Sometimes I think our players, they want to hear all the hip hop and the rap music. I don't have that in my collection (smiling).

JEFF FISCHEL: Florida State head coach, appreciate it. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH BRIAN GREGORY

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Georgia Tech head coach Brian Gregory.

Let's set where with this team is right now. How do you feel about heading into the season?

COACH GREGORY: I like the progress we've made. I said sometimes you go into the second year of a rebuilding job, rebuilding phase, you're worried you're going to have to take a step backwards in order to take two or three steps forward later. You have your first recruiting class. Those freshmen are going to play. We started three freshmen.

But I felt good starting those three freshmen, then having some guys play different roles than they've ever played before. I thought they took a step forward before. I thought we were able to become more solid on the defensive end, rebounding-wise, did some good things.

Our inconsistency was a big key. I think we lost five games in the league in the last minute and a half of the game. We were able to put forth a challenge to the guys and say, These things are working, these are things we need to improve on. I think our guys really embraced that.

THE MODERATOR: Four returning starters. That puts you in a good position.

COACH GREGORY: It really does. When you look at it, the three freshmen that are now sophomores, they need to make a big jump in their game. Daniel Miller as a senior was asked and challenged last year to move away from being kind of a complementary player and be a main focus of both our defensive game plan and some offensive stuff. He's All-ACC on the defensive end. I thought he did a great job.

We benefit from the fact of having Kam Holsey, who is start of a sixth starter. He has

starter production a lot of times. I do like the fact that nucleus is back and poised to continue to move forward.

THE MODERATOR: A couple fans have asked about Trae Golden.

COACH GREGORY: No news yet. All the paperwork is in. We wanted to make sure that everything was done to its utmost in terms of the information and so forth. The NCAA is just waiting to kind of go through it.

I would hope probably within another week or two before our last exhibition game. But someone asked, Has it been a challenge in practice? It really hasn't been because those first two weeks that we've just completed, all we've been doing is competing against each other as opposed to who is in a starting lineup. It was more we got 13 scholarship guys, six on one team, seven on the other, let's get after it. I think he's helped that.

We'll just have to wait and see.

THE MODERATOR: Obviously you develop a bond with these guys over time. Who do think Coach Gregory is?

COACH GREGORY: Hopefully a really good guy (smiling).

I think now you look at someone like Daniel or Kam, this is their third year of playing for me, I think they understand I'm a demanding coach, that I want the best for them, will give them every resource and tool needed to become the very best. But with that, their responsibility is to meet us halfway and give great effort.

I think they do understand that I believe that the excellence I want them to achieve is more of a daily habit. Those two guys in particular have really grown in terms of their daily approach to becoming not only a great player, but both those guys are going to graduate this year. All three of our seniors are going to graduate.

I know they know there's an attention to detail that I want them to live their life by.

THE MODERATOR: Last year, our set

had every school's name on the back. As you were walking up, you were looking specifically to see where Georgia Tech was up there.

COACH GREGORY: It was in the corner.

THE MODERATOR: We realized you were looking to make sure Georgia Tech was prominently placed.

COACH GREGORY: The other thing we really try to stress, there's a great pride in putting on a Georgia Tech uniform, when you look at the guys that have worn those uniforms in the past. There's a great pride in playing in this league. This is the best basketball league in the country by far. To play in this league, you have to make sure that every single day you're striving to become a little bit better and you're ready to go. If not, this league is going to eat you up.

That's the way it should be. Our guys have a great pride in wearing that uniform. They take great pride in playing in this league.

THE MODERATOR: You talked about how tough this conference is. It's gotten tougher. 1 through 15, this is a battle for you every night.

COACH GREGORY: Every single night. I think as a program, we're in the same position with other programs like Wake Forest, Boston College, Clemson, Maryland, Florida State, Virginia, schools fighting to take another step along the process, knowing that three tremendous premiere, elite programs in the country have just joined the league.

As we've moved forward, it's going to be interesting to see how far and in comparison, because right now from top to bottom, the markings of a great league is not only to be strong up top, but also for the emerging teams to continue to improve and not only be successful in the league, but also have post-season success. I think this league is poised to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Last year you were talking about the renovation of your arena, the emphasis on bringing back a lot of the former players, getting them involved with the tradition of the program. Can you update us on how that's going?

COACH GREGORY: The arena is wonderful. We get compliments on it every single day. Every opposing coach has enjoyed playing there in terms of just the new facility. I know they enjoy the new locker rooms that they have. They don't have to walk a mile-and-a-half to get from the locker room to the court.

Our attempt to get our history and our former players back involved over the last two years I think has been met with tremendous success. I appreciate them because they've had to take some steps, too. We can reach out. Unless they want to be part of the program, want to continue to help us rebuild the program, then it's not going to work.

They're passionate about Georgia Tech. I saw a tweet last week from Kenny Anderson. He said, There's only one school for me, Georgia Tech took care of me. That's what you want to see. We're starting to build that.

One of the most important things is for our current guys to understand that, that they're part of something special, to see the special guys that have been here in the past.

THE MODERATOR: Are you putting a number on wins? How do you recognize success for the season?

COACH GREGORY: Again, the question mark is the change in those 18 games you're playing. In addition, what we've done, because I felt we were going to be a better team, and there's no question we're a better team right now, better than at any point than last year. What does that end up being in terms of wins and losses? How does that translate? That's going to be the question.

But I think everybody in our program is excited about us taking another step forward. With that comes hopefully more wins.

THE MODERATOR: You're in a big city that has a lot of great basketball at the high school level. Seems like you've focused on making Georgia Tech.

COACH GREGORY: You can't have everybody from the state of Georgia, but you can try. I think that's one thing we've done in our first two years. We are going to make Georgia Tech an option for the best players in the state of Georgia, that understand that playing in the ACC, what that means, going to school at Georgia Tech, what that means, where those two combined place you during your career at the next step, then your career after you're done playing basketball. We've had pretty good success in doing that.

At the same time Georgia Tech and the ACC has a national brand as well. Being able to recruit out of that footprint, in different states, is something that we've been working hard on, as well.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck this season. Thanks for coming through.

COACH GREGORY: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH MARK TURGEON

JEFF FISCHER: Maryland head Coach Mark Turgeon.

I have a question from Twitter. Is it true you made Jake Layman cut his hair? If so, why?

COACH TURGEON: It's not true. He does have a haircut. I think his mom and dad made him cut it. That's the second question I've had on his hair today.

JEFF FISCHER: It had its own Twitter handle last year.

COACH TURGEON: He told me when he came back with his haircut that it was the new Jake. He's trying to do more things right on and off the floor.

I like his haircut. Makes him look like a kid again.

JEFF FISCHER: I've heard a total transformation as a player as well.

COACH TURGEON: He's playing well. He has his confidence. Transformation as a student, too. He's doing better in the classroom, which is important to me and his parents.

JEFF FISCHER: Let's talk about this season and what your expectations are big picture.

COACH TURGEON: Our expectations are pretty high. First year it was new to me, only had a few players. Last year we had a bunch of new players, trying to teach them the system. This year kind of feels like the way it's supposed to feel. We have a lot of good players. We can go big, small. We have added some good pieces.

We're much further along than we've been. We were able to go on a tour this summer, that really helped us. The maturity level is at a different level from last year. I think we lost a lot of games because we were so young and immature. That's changed.

Our leadership is better. We're going to miss the big fella, Alex, in the middle. He did a lot for us, defensively especially. But we have a lot of good players.

Across the board, the pieces fit. We're excited about this team.

JEFF FISCHER: I know Dez last year, you had to figure out how to make him fit into the puzzle. He was starting to take leadership for this team.

COACH TURGEON: That's where he's really improved. He's really worked hard on the leadership part. He's become a phenomenal leader for our team. Him and Nick Faust and even Smotrycz feed off each other, three juniors. Don't have a senior I recruited. John Auslander is a senior for us. We're still somewhat young.

Those three guys fit off each other. Dez Wells has been more of a vocal leader in practice we Evan. Dez works, he's hungry, wants to be part of something special.

He had a great spring, a great summer. He's had a great fall so far. Hopefully he'll have a great winter.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions.

Q. Being the last year in the league this year, any extra motivation to want to go out with a bang?

COACH TURGEON: We haven't talked about that a lot yet because we're just trying to get through practice. We have non-conference.

But there's no doubt in our mind that the success we've had in the ACC over the last 60 years, we've had a lot of individual players that have gone on and had great careers, great careers at Maryland. I've had some really good coaches in Lefty and Gary. We've had some really good teams, ACC league champions, tournament champions, national champions.

We know we have a responsibility our last year to represent Maryland in the ACC. Means a lot to us, to our players. I'm hoping it gives us

extra motivation. I hope it allows us to win a couple more games knowing this is the last time we're going to play at this building, play this team in the ACC. Hopefully that will give us motivation and hopefully sneak out a few more wins because of it.

JEFF FISCHER: Talking to the guys this morning, they had the sense that wherever you traveled, the crowd was going to be extra fired up about playing Maryland. It's not a focus for you. It becomes part of the reality you are dealing with.

COACH TURGEON: Yeah. The road's never easy. I think the best way to handle the road is just play well. If we lost, we usually heard ACC chants last year. If we won, you didn't hear 'em.

They didn't make the decision, but our kids know what lies ahead. But the road is tough. The better team we are, the more hostile the road crowd is going to be.

That's fun. There's nothing better than being on the road and playing in front of hostile crowds. We look forward to that.

JEFF FISCHER: How pumped are you and the players to do Maryland Madness?

COACH TURGEON: Not as pumped as the fans are, but we're pumped. It was a great idea. Our players will be excited when they see a full house. To me it was a no-brainer. I hope this leads to us doing some more things down the road in Cole Arena. It's going to be a fun night, there's no doubt about it. I just hope it's filled to the rafters.

I've heard from a lot of former students and players how excited they are about it.

JEFF FISCHER: No doubt Maryland fans get fired up in a tent. That has to be fun. Wherever you're playing, Friday night or home games, that crowd is always there.

COACH TURGEON: They are. Our student body has been great. We have to do a better job filling the seats most nights. In the ACC we have great crowds. Hopefully we can have better crowds this year because our team is better.

We scheduled better this year. Our home games are much better non-conference. Hopefully that will put more people in the stands.

JEFF FISCHER: Are turnovers still a concern with this team?

COACH TURGEON: Turnovers and decision making, shot selection is a main concern. We've gotten better. We've worked hard at it. Actually stole a drill from Jim Larranaga that I think has helped with our turnovers in practice. Can't do the same drill in the game. It's helped us. Our

guys have been more conscious of taking care of the basketball.

Another concern of mine would be defensively without the big fella Alex there. He covered up a lot of our mistakes. Individually we have to get better.

Our two best defenders are gone, Pe'Shon Howard and Alex Len, so guys have to step up.

JEFF FISCHER: When you had a ball handler you could trust, it was Pe'Shon. Who will step up?

COACH TURGEON: Seth Allen got better as the year went on. Roddy Peters will be in at the point guard, too. They're both good players. They're both very good on the break. They both need to get better in the halfcourt as far as running our team.

But we had turnovers. Nick Faust had turnovers. Dez Wells led us in turnovers at the three spot. Jake Layman turned the ball over. Charles Mitchell turned the ball over. Individually they all have to get better at taking care of the basketball.

I have a better feel for this team than I did last year's team. We're much further along. I think the things we're doing offensively will help us take care of the basketball.

JEFF FISCHER: Who was your favorite college player growing up?

COACH TURGEON: Growing up was Darnell Valentine at the University of Kansas. He was a guy I really looked up to.

JEFF FISCHER: Then you followed in those footsteps.

COACH TURGEON: He was a guy from Wichita, Kansas, that was part of my life, formative years, 8 through probably 12. Good player at the University of Kansas. At the University of Kansas basketball player is a guy I looked up to.

JEFF FISCHER: Game of horse amongst the ACC coaches, who wins?

COACH TURGEON: Probably Tony Bennett. I don't know.

JEFF FISCHER: You're more of a point guard.

COACH TURGEON: I'm a better shooter now that it doesn't matter. I played for a guy that wouldn't let me shoot either, Coach Brown. So I blame him.

I think Tony probably if I'm quickly going through would probably be the best shooter.

JEFF FISCHER: If you could make one

rule change, what would it be?

COACH TURGEON: One rule change? I like the rule changes we made this year. I think the blocked charge is a tough call. I think freedom of movement is something that I really like. I try to teach the game that way. You get penalized sometimes that way.

That's really about it. I'm one of the guys, whatever the rules are going to be, I'm going to try to play that way.

JEFF FISCHER: The one-and-done rule, would you like to see that changed?

COACH TURGEON: I think that would be tremendous for college basketball. Probably what everybody else has said, you know, treat it like baseball, football. I guess football can't do it. Baseball, if you want to go out in high school, let them go. If you want to go to college, you have to stay three years.

I don't know if we'll get to three years, but if we get to two years, sometimes kids get to two, they realize they need to stay three or four. A little bit more mature at that time. Halfway through with their education. I think it would help our game if we could get that rule changed.

There's kids that are good enough to go pro out of high school.

JEFF FISCHER: You recently said you see a new Nick Faust this year. What did you mean by that?

COACH TURGEON: He's concentrating on the things we need him to concentrate on. One is being the best defender. He needs to guard the best perimeter player every night. He has the ability to do that. He's been dialed in in practice, making the right decision, do what's best for our team.

JEFF FISCHER: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH JIM LARRAÑAGA

JEFF FISCHER: We're joined by Professor Larrañaga. You've been named a professor at Miami.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: An adjunct professor. I'm not going to be teaching a full class. I'm going to be a guest lecturer, talking to the students about teamwork, leadership, what life is like after college.

JEFF FISCHER: We've talked before about how you consider yourself a teacher first.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I've always thought of myself as an educator, someone who works with players, teaches them not just the game of basketball, but the game of life, trying to prepare them for when their basketball days are over, and still want to be highly successful.

We want our players to be both happy and successful long after their college basketball days are over at Miami.

JEFF FISCHER: A quote I saw recently, you talked about how you were with this team, you started with addition and subtraction, heading to multiplication and division, not sure you're going to get to calculus.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: Last year we had a veteran team with only one freshman, a group of guys who had laid a very strong foundation the year before when they were juniors. Then we had an outstanding sophomore leader in Shane Larkin to go along with those five seniors. They were able to accomplish things that had never been done before in Miami basketball history.

We won the regular-season tournament outright, tournament championship, went to the Sweet 16. We were ranked No. 2 in the country at one point. We earned the No. 2 seed in the NCAA tournament.

We also had sell-out crowds night in and night out. We defeated both Duke and North Carolina in the same season by more than 25 points for the first time in ACC history.

There was a lot of things that the team was able to accomplish. We really enjoyed that journey.

JEFF FISCHER: Give me a sense of what you're seeing on the court in practice.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I'm seeing a lot of new faces. A lot of young guys with energy and enthusiasm. All very, very tough competitors. They love to compete in practice. They push each other in the weight room. They'll push each other on the court. Every game we play, whether it's to 5, 11, 21, a full scrimmage, they're at each other from start to finish. I love that energy and enthusiasm.

They are listening very well. They're learning. But because we have so much to learn, we've got to go slowly because everybody learns at a different rate. We need to be sure we don't leave anybody behind. We only have 10 scholarship players available. We have three freshmen new to the program. We have a junior college player new to the program. We have a fifth-year player, Donnavan Kirk, who was at Miami years ago, but came back after graduating from DePaul. He's going to be a fifth-year senior to us. Then we have five veteran players and a couple of walk-ons.

We've got a lot of work to do in terms of implementing our style. Our players have a lot of work to do in learning that. Once you've learned it, perfect it. It's not just learning the offense, it's learning how to execute it under tremendous duress from an opponent.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions.

Q. You lost a lot of outstanding players. Who are you looking for this year to step up?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I would say we

have three players right now who have some experience and are going to be counted on, especially early in the season, to lead us.

Garrius Adams who redshirted last year, enjoying a fine career up until the injury. We're counting on him.

Rion Brown, our leading returning scorer for last season, who had a great NCAA tournament, especially our game against Illinois.

Then Tonye Jekiri, who came in off the bench last year, will move into the starting lineup as our starting center. He was 215 pounds, now he's 241. Much stronger and improved player.

We're counting on those three guys to handle their positions, and then we're trying to find the complementary players to them so that we can be competitive in the ACC.

Q. You talked about all the success you had last season. With bringing in Pittsburgh, Notre Dame and Syracuse, how much more difficult does it make repeating something like that?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: Well, I think for all the teams in the ACC, ourselves included obviously, the challenge to win the ACC regular season and tournament championship is far more difficult. Those three teams, they've competed in the Big East, have competed for championships every year.

Syracuse, they went to the Final Four last year. Notre Dame has a veteran team returning. Jamie Dixon has had Pittsburgh, regular-season champion, a number of times. All those teams are loaded.

When you add those rosters to the ACC perennial champions in Duke, Carolina, you have Florida State, Maryland, Virginia, all who have veteran squads returning, our job has gotten very, very difficult.

JEFF FISCHER: If there's a change you could make to the game of basketball, on or off the floor, what would you like to see changed?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I guess the answer to that is I love the way the game of college basketball is being played. I don't want to see a lot of changes because I think every time we make a change, we really don't know what the transition is going to be with that change.

I like the stability of our game. If we could reduce the shot clock from 35 seconds down to 30 seconds, I think that would be good. I think if we could implement this new block charge rule,

officialiate it correctly, I think that can be very promising.

The thing I love about the game is it's pretty darn entertaining right now. I don't want to see a lot of changes.

JEFF FISCHER: Talk about new metrics, how you use that as a coach.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I don't think the metrics are very new. I think they've been around for a long time. Dean Smith had a system of what he called OER, DER, offensive efficiency rating, defensive efficiency rating. It was based on the number one.

The Kenpom stats help us to identify strengths and weaknesses in our program. Before my staff and I arrived at Miami, Miami's turnover rate was ranked 218th out of 345 schools. They were turning the ball over an awful lot. This last season we were ranked 16th in that category.

What helps us, helps motivate the players, is knowing that they're improving in a certain category, whether it's in field goal percentage, defensive field goal percentage, or defensive turnover percentage. If you can turn the ball over fewer and fewer times, you're going to be more successful at the offensive end. By having those Kenpom stats, it helps us to give a clear vision to our players, a picture of what we want to accomplish, where we stand in relationship to the rest of the country.

JEFF FISCHER: Professor Larrañaga, thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH ROY WILLIAMS

JEFF FISCHER: We have North Carolina basketball Coach Roy Williams.

Roy, how has the off-season been for you?

COACH WILLIAMS: It was a wild summer, there's no question about that. I didn't enjoy most of it. But also there were times with my family, with my grandsons that I did love. Times I was with my team I did love. The other stuff has gotten all the attention, though.

JEFF FISCHER: We'll take questions.

Q. Last year you played an extremely young team. You went through some growing pains. What did that group learn that is going to help you this year?

COACH WILLIAMS: I think they understand now much better how to handle adversity. You start losing guys, I think we lost 12 guys early to the NBA draft in the last eight or nine years, but I think those kids understand that part of it. They kept practicing and working every day. Things got better at the end. Hopefully they'll have it stick-to-itiveness. Hopefully they'll have that, if that's that word.

Q. Your thoughts about adding Jim Boeheim to the mix. Is he the most or least popular guy here?

COACH WILLIAMS: I like having Jimmy here. He's one of the few guys in college basketball coaching older than me.

Jimmy and I played a lot of golf together, been on a lot of committees together. A really good friend. Unfortunately for me, I was one of his biggest moments in 2003 when they beat our Kansas team to win his national championship.

I love having him in the league. I think North Carolina playing Syracuse the first day is

going to be a big game, a big rivalry. We're not going to have to wait 10 or 15 years to build anything up.

I think Jimmy is well-liked right now. 20 years ago it was a whole different thing. He's mellowed so much, he's doing a lot better right now. I've been with him on the golf course and really enjoy him.

Q. What is status of P.J. Hairston? Do you expect him to miss games?

COACH WILLIAMS: I'm not a huge NFL fan, but I love Bill Belichick's comment. He's inactive. He's inactive. He's inactive. One of the coolest press conferences I've ever seen.

P.J. is going to miss some games. I'm not going to go into the locker room and say, P.J. you're not playing tonight. We'll let people know about it before.

There's several things he's going through at this time, has completed some and has not completed some of the others. He's done enough to come back to practice. He's been sensational in practice. He was sensational in the running program, the most difficult conditioning thing I've ever done with any player. Hopefully he'll continue that as we play.

JEFF FISCHER: What is the timeframe for making a decision?

COACH WILLIAMS: Like I said, he's still doing things. When he gets through taking care of his business.

Q. Reggie did so many things so well for you last year. How do you replace what you lost with him?

COACH WILLIAMS: It is really hard. Not only was he a shooter, he had a tremendous assist-to-error ratio. He was a great rebounder from his position. He was a very good defensive player. You don't just replace that guy with that many good qualities with somebody who has never played at the collegiate level.

Leslie has to be a better defender. J.P. has to not turn the ball over. We're going to get guys to play to their strengths, stay away from their weaknesses.

Losing Reggie Bullock was a tremendous loss for us. Last year at this time I would not have thought he was going to leave. At the end of the season I didn't think he was going to leave. He was on the borderline between being a number one pick or second-round pick.

But it worked out great for him. He worked his tail off in the workouts. He was the 26th selection for the Clippers. Happy for him, but big shoes left for us to fill.

Q. With the addition of Syracuse and Pitt and Notre Dame, Louisville next year, some of the previous coaches here today have said this has the potential to be the best conference from a basketball perspective ever created. Your thoughts on what this conference can be.

COACH WILLIAMS: I agree. I think not only can be, I think it will be the greatest basketball conference ever. Look at the depth of the league. We can't call it Tobacco Road anymore unless we include South Bend, Syracuse and Pittsburgh. The road got longer and tougher.

Every game night, oh man, oh man, you better strap it on.

Q. You mentioned how many players you lost early. Would you like there to be a rule change similar to baseball where players had to stay two, three years, whatever?

COACH WILLIAMS: I honestly believe this. There is no rule that's perfect for everybody. I think LeBron, Kobe, Kevin Garnett, they made great decisions. Some made decisions that was not great for them. I don't think there's any one rule that's perfect for everybody.

I would like to figure out myself what that rule would be, then try to get everybody to go along with it.

We have lost guys early. I don't think the baseball rule is perfect. You can ask the baseball coaches, they would tell you, Oh, my gosh, you don't want that.

The one-and-done is what we have now. If they change it to two years, I'd probably like that a little bit better. We'll have to work with that. I don't think there's any rule that's perfect for everybody.

Q. Could you see Marcus Paige and Nate Britt on the court together?

COACH WILLIAMS: Yes. We've done that in practice already. Luke Davis would be in that mix. I don't think you would see Luke, Marc and Nate, all three at the same time. It would be like a team of jockeys out there running around on the court we'd be so small. I do believe we'll see two of them at a time.

JEFF FISCHER: We had Brice Johnson in here earlier talking about how he's eating.

COACH WILLIAMS: I don't care how much he eats, I just want him to be stronger. It's difficult for Brice to gain weight. Difficult for Marcus Paige. Difficult for Kennedy to lose the weight. You have to put them all together.

Both those guys that I mentioned there, it's really helped Kennedy. Kennedy has dropped quite a few pounds, from 317 to 285 since he came to see us this summer. Brice has gotten up a little bit. That's helped him on the post area, rebounding. Marcus played last year at 154. This year he's gotten up to 170. No doubt the strength has helped him, too.

Q. Kennedy Meeks, you talked about how he's lost the weight. What kind of player do you think you see him becoming? Is there a player that was there before that he resembles?

COACH WILLIAMS: I hope it is. I hope it's Sean May, he was pretty good.

Kennedy was too heavy, has worked really hard, has done a nice job, has great feet, maybe as good a passing big man as I ever coached. Just got to get him to build his stamina up, explosiveness. It's going to be a marathon.

With Joel James, Kennedy, I gave them the same saying, Rome wasn't built in a day. They tell me back, But it was worked on every day.

Really nice man from right here in Charlotte.

Q. Having Coach Boeheim, what can you say about having him in the conference?

COACH WILLIAMS: Well, I did say it. One of the lines I like, I'll give it to you, too, it's one guy in the league older than I am.

Jimmy and I have played a lot of golf together, been on committees together, coached against each other. We worked with USA Basketball on select teams. He's a guy I really enjoy. Hall of Fame coach. Tremendous,

tremendous job on the bench. Very long, long career. Won over 900 games. I think we're fortunate to have him in the league.

I made a \$5 bet with somebody two years ago that he would never coach a game in the ACC. It's been so long ago I can't remember who the bet was with. I owe somebody \$5. I know it wasn't one of you rascals.

Q. Who are you counting on to step up and be leaders?

COACH WILLIAMS: This summer I made decisions, I told them who the leaders were. It's easy to be a great leader if you don't make mistakes. That's James Michael and Marcus Paige don't make the kind of mistakes that were made. If they make a mistake, it's a mistake, it won't happen very often with either one of those kids. I declared them as the leaders of our team.

But on the court, the players do it themselves. The respect they have for each other trumps everything that a coach can say.

Marcus and James are going to decide whether we eat at Wendy's or Burger Chef. On the court, your play does it. Marcus Paige is a point guard, that's a leadership role because of the position. James Michael has been important to us for three years.

The other guys have to understand that.

Q. Commissioner Swofford said that the ACC tournament should end up in New York at some point. Would you be in favor of that? Would it improve the status of the ACC?

COACH WILLIAMS: I think we've done a pretty doggone good job of moving it around. North Carolina has been the foundation of the ACC for a long time, the state, whether it's Charlotte or Greensboro for the tournament. Those people have done a marvelous job.

In Greensboro, for example, it's the biggest thing going. The whole town knows about it. I love that.

Also we've been in Washington, D.C., Tampa, Greensboro, Charlotte, Atlanta. We've moved it around a little bit. I hope we keep doing that. I think New York will be a fantastic place for it, but I also hope people don't forget about the foundation we have here.

JEFF FISCHER: Good luck to the Tar Heels this season.

COACH WILLIAMS: Thank you.

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH MARK GOTTFRIED

JEFF FISCHER: I'm with Mark Gottfried from NC State.

Do you need name tags for your team this year?

COACH GOTTFRIED: Yes. Lots of them. We have a new team, different team. It's going to be a fun team I think to watch, watch them grow and develop.

Yeah, we don't have a lot of the veteran guys like a lot of teams do.

JEFF FISCHER: It's somewhat symptomatic of what college basketball is right now. There's a lot of change year after year.

COACH GOTTFRIED: I think there's a lot of change. We obviously see more guys leave for the NBA. We see more young guys in our sport transfer. Sometimes we benefit from that because kids do transfer.

We're also in a situation, when I got the job two years ago, we had a nucleus of players that returned. We had them for two years. They won 48 games. They did a lot of great things. Went to back-to-back tournaments. Now that group is gone.

It's somewhat for us like you're turning the page. Now it's a new time to build, a new group of guys. I think from that perspective it's going to be real interesting.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions.

Q. Is this going to be an easier or tougher coaching job than last year for you?

COACH GOTTFRIED: That's a good question. I think in one respect it's going to be tougher because this is a group that has to learn a lot and you want to get competitive. We want to become an NCAA tournament basketball team.

How are we going to do that? I don't know that's an easy thing for this group because we have so many questions, unknowns with our team.

At times last year you took a veteran team. It's nice to know that Scott Wood is going to score and make threes every night, Richard Howell is going to get 12 rebounds, Lorenzo, you could go on and on and on.

Practice is different with a group of young players. When we start playing games, there's going to be a great learning curve for this group because they're just not going to know yet how to win or how to execute things they need to execute to win a game.

It's going to be interesting with our group.

Q. Talk about a lot of newness on your side with your squad. Talk about the new teams coming in.

COACH GOTTFRIED: We've kind of got the double whammy a little bit. We've lost some great players. We may take a step back so we can eventually take a step forward.

At the same time the league got better, tougher, deeper. We've added in three high-quality teams this year that have great expectations, that expect to be in the NCAA tournament, that expect to potentially be in a Final Four like Syracuse was this year.

It's going to make it more difficult than it normally would. I think it's also going to make it more fun. You want to play against the best, beat the best. I think this league is becoming clearly the best basketball conference in the country.

For us, we have to get good quick. These young guys we have, they understand it. They get it. That's why they chose to play at NC State.

Q. With the expectations being set where they are because your group is so new, is there a thought that the promise of big wins could be even bigger and sweeter this season should they occur home or away?

COACH GOTTFRIED: I think there's probably a little truth to that. I think if our team finds a way to become good enough to compete with the best teams in this league, I think they are going to be really special. Although I will tell you, beating North Carolina and Duke last year, Duke was No. 1 in the country, that was pretty special, too, at that time, even with a veteran group.

We're a program that's trying to take steps, to build ourselves up to where we can be one of the best teams in this league. We got a young group that's going to be somewhat the foundation that we've laid here as we move forward from the last two years.

Q. Break down the new pieces you have, Rolston Turner.

COACH GOTTFRIED: Rolston Turner is a player, the good news is he's played in the SEC, played at this level. He's been a good player for LSU. He sat out last year. He understands everything we're doing. He took advantage of a redshirt year.

Outside of that, all these other guys are brand-new to this level. Cat Barber is a point guard that we're excited about. Got a chance to become a great player. He's as good of an on-ball defender as I've ever had.

Desmond Lee is a junior college player we've been impressed with every day. About 6'3". A guy I think that can help our team this year.

Then we have three interior young freshmen guys, Lennard Freeman, Kyle Washington, T.J. Warren. Each day it's different. Each day one of them will be good, the next day somebody else will be good. The good news is they're all trying, have phenomenal attitudes. They want to become good.

We've got some new pieces, guys that haven't done anything at our level, they have to step forward and become good.

Q. You were talking about the players leaving early. Would you like to see the rule changed where they have to stay longer than the one-and-done?

COACH GOTTFRIED: I think there's a lot of ways to look at that. I think if you're going to have a situation where players have to come to college, like we do now, one year is not enough, in my opinion. I would like to see three years, like baseball, or even the NFL. I would like for players that are good enough to go out of high school to have the opportunity to go out of high school.

When you look back at LeBron, Kobe, Kevin Garnett, some of those guys, I don't know we can say it was a bad thing for them. For some of those guys it worked out pretty well.

I'd like to see guys have an opportunity to work towards their degree. If they were in school for three years, if the NBA doesn't work out, professional basketball ends at some point, now they have a chance where they're in striking distance to get a college education, their degree.

The one-year rule in place now I think might be the worst part about it. It's the worst way we could do it.

I'm not the commissioner of the NBA or the president of the NCAA. If I was for a day, I'd try to find a way to get that done.

JEFF FISCHER: Coach, thank you.

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October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH MIKE BREY

JEFF FISCHER: We have Notre Dame head coach Mike Brey.

We've talked about this a couple times, but you never imagined the ACC would extend all the way to South Bend, Indiana.

COACH BREY: No way. Growing up a Maryland basketball fan, spending eight years in this league as an assistant at Duke, I never thought I'd be coaching in the ACC at Notre Dame. I'm thrilled, our fans are thrilled. Our team is excited about joining such a prestigious, classy league. Here we go this year.

I'm excited that we're getting in a year earlier than we first thought because I still have some experience back, namely senior guards, which hopefully can help me navigate what is going to be a new challenge for us.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions, please.

Q. Having been a long time assistant at Duke, do you feel you have an advantage coming back?

COACH BREY: I do think I'm a little more comfortable than if we would have joined the Big Ten or the Big 12, knowing this league. Some of the venues, I only knew Cole Field House, not Maryland's new facility, Reynolds Coliseum. There's a lot of new places. There's familiarity being in those towns, the rhythm of the ACC. I've run into so many familiar faces today, media, that were covering us when I was at Duke. I think that will help.

I have two assistants that are former ACC players, one a Georgia Tech grad and one a Virginia grad. Maybe it was just meant to be.

Q. I saw a great quote on Twitter talking about your experiences under K and his propensity for eating his young.

COACH BREY: No question, he subscribes to the theory of eating his young, absolutely. We had fun this summer talking about the league. We're certainly at very different points in our careers. I'm certainly very indebted.

It was a fabulous experience, the eight years I was there, being trained to be a head coach. I was very ready then to move on to Delaware and Notre Dame, draw on those experiences every day.

Having said that, we're in it now. I'm excited about that. With Duke and Carolina now on our schedule, when I got to Notre Dame in 2000, we were kind of the whipping boy of the Big East. When we finally got to the point where we could beat a Syracuse and Connecticut, those were program, credible wins. Carolina and Duke are that now for our basketball program.

Mike and I talked a lot about the ACC on the road this summer, how it's changed, different styles of play. It's going to be neat being back on Tobacco Road.

Q. How much do you, Pitt, and Syracuse bring of the Big East to the ACC, or is it the other way around, you have to fit in?

COACH BREY: I've been asked so much about all this style of play, the ACC style, the Big East style. I think what the three of us, eventually Louisville, what the ACC is going to have that the Big East had was all kinds of styles which makes it so exciting for fans and interesting for players and challenging for coaches in their preparations.

All three of us coming in all do it a little bit differently. I hope we can add a little spice, a little variety to the league.

But the league, certainly you have Carolina and Duke, then you have a lot of programs trending up, guys that are building their programs with really good momentum.

Again, I think we become the best and deepest league right away. We're going to get a lot of bids. It's going to kind of roll over from the Big East to the ACC, in my opinion.

Q. Is it going to be strange for you to not be going back to the Garden but traveling back to North Carolina?

COACH BREY: Very strange. If there's one thing I will really miss from the Big East is the Big East tournament in the Garden. That was an amazing experience. I know there's some talk of maybe this league moving that way eventually. That I think would be really good if we could pull that off.

I also remember being an assistant at Duke, playing in Greensboro, the electricity of the ACC. I'm excited that I'll get to coach in that in the heart of ACC country.

JEFF FISCHER: Your backcourt is phenomenal. How good does that feel as a coach?

COACH BREY: When you have guards like that, I don't want to over-coach them. I want to get those guys healthy, feed them, let them play.

As Abe Lemons said, the old Texas coach, he started off his speech by saying, If you ain't got guards, you ain't got blank. That's true. We have old guards that have played together for a while. I would add Pat Connaughton in that.

If you have good perimeter players, they give us a chance in this first year.

Q. (Indiscernible) and Cooley. Who is the next?

COACH BREY: I hope there's one brewing. May be by committee. I expect Eric, Sherman, the transfer from Michigan State. He's 23, a fifth-year senior. We really need him to do things. Zach Auguste, the young big guy.

We're going to have to do it by committee up front. Luckily for those big guys, they have some experienced guards to hold their hand and help them.

Q. Can we expect to see any surprise Notre Dame uniforms again this year?

COACH BREY: Man, we shook 'em up with those uniforms. I still hear from our alumni on those things.

Our players loved them. The guys I'm recruiting loved them more. That was enough for me.

We're going to ratchet it back a little bit. I don't think Greensboro would be the stage to break out something that loud. New York would be better.

JEFF FISCHER: I liked them.

COACH BREY: Our players loved them. I tell you what, everybody we were recruiting, our guys loved them. Dick's Sporting Goods loved them. Everybody loved the socks. It was a little extreme. Even this football weekend with USC, alums will come up to me and say, Excited about the ACC, and by the way I didn't like the uniforms last year.

JEFF FISCHER: When you're recruiting guys now, the message, You're in the ACC, how does that resonate?

COACH BREY: I think that's really powerful. Again, you still have the Syracuse, Pitt, Louisville thing. I still kind of count Virginia Tech, BC and Miami as Big East guys. It wasn't that long ago we were banging heads with them. Certainly BC and Notre Dame have a long history of rivalry and tradition in every sport. That's kind of reignited.

I think on the recruiting front, it's really woken people up. I'm in Big Ten country all the time. I'm fighting the Big Ten. It's Carolina, Duke, the ACC, more of those Midwest kids I think have a little more of an open mind to Notre Dame, closer to their home in the Midwest, but instead of the Big East, it's the ACC. That's been powerful.

JEFF FISCHER: We talked a little bit about the guards, challenges in the front court. You have guys stepping in now. Talk about a freshmen class that comes in.

COACH BREY: Demetrius Jackson, McDonald's All-American from South Bend, Indiana. We haven't had a kid from South Bend that played for our team in 40 years. We were fortunate enough to keep him home, a guard that will help us right away. We'll play him with Atkins and Grant. Those three guys together give us the speed on the perimeter I don't know if we've ever had in the history of our program.

JEFF FISCHER: V.J. as well?

COACH BREY: V.J. gives us speed. All those guys are battling for minutes. I'm really pleased. That's our next wave of perimeter when these old guys leave. I feel good we have good,

young guards that will take the torch when it's time.
JEFF FISCHER: Thank you. Good luck
this season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH JAMIE DIXON

JEFF FISCHER: We have Pitt head coach Jamie Dixon.

Have you accidentally said Big East instead of ACC at some point today?

COACH DIXON: It's been a long day. I might have used the Big West, Big Sky back in the day.

We've been talking about it for so long, two years, it's finally here. So we are excited.

But, no, I think we're well aware who we're playing against this year.

JEFF FISCHER: We can take questions.

Q. After coaching in the Big East, what have you been told about ACC conference play? What are you expecting?

COACH DIXON: What have we been told? First of all, we're excited. We think it's great. We found our home. We've been talking about for so many years where we were going to be, what conference we were going to be in. That's been going on for about 10 years for us, given our location, given our situation with the Big East.

We're just excited. It's good to be asked, What's it like to be in the ACC, rather than what conference you're in.

Who are we going to play? We're going to play the best teams in the country. That's what we were doing before. That's what we're doing now.

I went down to the Duke football game a couple weeks ago. We had a lot of Pitt people there at the game. I think people are going to find, we have a lot of fans that have ties to Pitt that live in this area, in this region. That's exciting.

I saw that with the Duke game we saw down here. A lot of fans that live down here,

whenever the steel industry closed down. There's a lot of ties with Pitt fans down here.

I think it's great. I think it's a great tie-in. I think it's something that we'll show with the following that we get from Pitt people.

Q. You come in with Syracuse and Notre Dame. When you get together with those teams, is it going to be back to the Big East rough and tough days or are you going to change a little bit?

COACH DIXON: Yeah, we're going to change Coach Boeheim, how he does everything, change him overnight (smiling).

I think Coach Brey, he's changed over the years. Coach Boeheim has changed in slight ways with his zone, little things that he does with it. But we're always trying to tinker and improve as coaches.

But we just had the three of us together for a little sit-down. Good friends, great respect for both of the programs. I think maybe there's some familiarity with those guys and the coaches due to playing against each other, being on committees together.

There's 15 really good teams. We're going to be all fighting for a spot.

Q. The Big East had the reputation of being a very physical league. Do you anticipate a big change coming to the ACC?

COACH DIXON: I think what's going to happen here is you've gone from eight teams now to 15 teams over the years. You're going to see a lot of different styles in the ACC. You're going to bring in teams that play a lot of zone in both Notre Dame and Syracuse obviously. You got teams that are going to come in and press some with Louisville.

What I found in the Big East, because we found it, too, we were nine teams, ten teams, I was there 15 years, we saw changes in the membership, we saw changes in the style of play.

I think that's what happens. I think you're going to see more styles of play just because there's more teams, first off, and you're not playing each team twice, you're going to play them once. You're going to see pressing teams, zone teams, matchup zone teams, switching teams. You're going to see different things.

I think it's going to make it better for us as programs, too, because you're going to see all different types. I think the ACC has been basically man-to-man. With our league, you've seen everything. It's going to be hard to label it. It's going to be labeled because that's what people got to do. They got to have a headline, got to have something to attach to it.

The reality is there's a lot of diversity, a lot of different styles in the Big East. Oftentimes we've been labeled and we've been far from what that label has been. We've been one of the best teams offensively in the country. The numbers surely indicate it. The people that do the analysis of it all show how good we have been offensively. Yet if we're labeled, they'll say we're the physical defensive team. The numbers would prove something completely different.

I think you're going to see a lot more style. I think at the end of the day that's going to make us better teams, especially when going to the NCAA tournament. We'll be better prepared because of playing against more teams obviously, because there's 15, but more styles that are going to develop because of the different teams coming in.

JEFF FISCHER: You mentioned stats. Do you look at those?

COACH DIXON: We definitely do. To me that's always been important than points per game, but the pace of the game can change based on who you're playing against. Points per possession is very important. We always look at that, look at what we do each time we have the ball, how we're guarding it or attacking with it. We've always looked at that and been really good at both ends.

With our record, you have to be pretty good on both sides of the court, offense and defense. We've done that consistently year in, year out.

We're trying to get better, improve in that. We're trying to win national championships. We haven't done that. That's been our failure. That's what we're trying to do.

JEFF FISCHER: You lose Trey and Steven. You have three big returning starters back. Talk about where you are.

COACH DIXON: Last year we were an inexperienced team on the perimeter. Then we got pretty much everybody back except Trey on the perimeter. One year to the next, you're probably an experienced team on the perimeter. That's how it works now in college basketball. One year makes you young to old. That's the situation we're in.

Yet our post guys I'd say are new, don't have the experience. We lost a guy, went as a lottery pick freshman year, one-and-done guy. We have to fill that hole.

I think we'll do it by committee. We don't have a 7-footer in there, but we'll have some good size. I like our perimeters. I like our guards. I think we have some experienced guards, versatile guards, and good athletes all the way through.

JEFF FISCHER: Give me your take on the one-and-done rule.

COACH DIXON: It is what it is. We have no say in it. It's the NBA's rule. That's what we play with. We can say all we want, at the end of the day they're going to have to change it.

I think everyone is different. You get a guy like Steve Adams who was a kid that played one year, continued to go to classes, took online courses once he left Pitt. Was a 3.5 student, a very good kid. He was there with the intention of going to school all the way through.

At the end of the day, we recognized it. His family recognized it. He's a 7-footer that's 19 years old. Your best time to go in the draft is now. That's what we felt, that's what he felt, his family felt.

When you're a freshman, they draft on potential. When you're 7-foot, 19, potential is now. That's why he made that decision, why we supported it. He's in a good position. I think there's a lot of talk about it. There's very few that are doing it. All would like to do it, go one-and-done, but only a very few can do it.

JEFF FISCHER: If you were in charge of college basketball, what would be the rule you'd like to see?

COACH DIXON: For guys coming in? Getting two years out of them would be good. Now, go after a high school, similar to like the baseball rule, maybe make it two years instead of three. To me, I think you've come up with a solution. At least there's some give-and-take on both ends of it there. I think that's probably the best way.

NBA doesn't want that. They don't want to take high school kids in. I don't know if they'll ever go to that situation. Again, I think that's the best on both sides. That's a little bit of compromise, which is what we all need a little bit of right now.

JEFF FISCHER: Jamie, thank you.

COACH DIXON: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH JIM BOEHEIM

THE MODERATOR: We have Syracuse head coach Jim Boeheim.

You said this is going to be a lot like going to the dentist.

COACH BOEHEIM: Without novocaine (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions right away.

Q. Are you the most popular guy here or least popular? Are guys happy to see you in their league this year?

COACH BOEHEIM: I don't know. I'm not evaluating that. I'm not sure where I am here in this world.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH BOEHEIM: We're excited. Obviously this has been a long time coming, thinking about it. To me, everything is done. We're in the ACC. We're excited about it. Our fans are obviously excited about it. We're selling more season tickets than we've sold in a long time.

There's more excitement about Duke, Carolina, these schools coming in. The players are excited to be in this league. I think the coaches are. It's just a tremendous challenge. It's a great league. You want to be in the best league you can be in. This is, I believe, the best league.

Q. You played a lot of the teams in the ACC. Talk about what it's like now competing for a championship with them now.

COACH BOEHEIM: Every year when you start out in your league, you're trying to win the league. That's what you're trying to do.

We played a lot of these teams, six or seven of these teams were in the Big East. We got familiarity with them, them with us. We played Duke, Carolina, Georgia Tech, Virginia over the last few years home and home.

It's not completely unfamiliar. Coaches and players adjust quickly. They'll get to know us, we'll get to know them. By the time the ACC league starts, we'll be ready to go.

Q. If I'm not mistaken, your last game as a player was against Duke. Can you draw a line from that in '66?

COACH BOEHEIM: I didn't want to remember that game. Didn't turn out the right way.

But, you know, having the kind of interest that our fans have in Duke, I mean Georgetown they were sold out the week before the game, and that's a first by the long ways. I think Carolina will do the same things, some of the other games. I don't think I've seen our fans this excited about basketball in years.

It's not like we got bad fans that are just getting excited. They've been great. We've been second in attendance in the country for the last 15 years, whatever it is. It's nice to see they've embraced this league.

I think, to steal a quote from my good friend at Duke, these games are going to be instant rivalries. You're going to have right away games that are big games, meaningful games. You'll create rivalries immediately.

Q. Looking at Mike Krzyzewski, what is it going to be like for you to have the opportunity to go up against him, have him in the dome, what it really means to know how successful you've both been?

COACH BOEHEIM: I've coached against really good friends a lot. You just don't really look down. When we play Duke, I'm concerned about his players and he's concerned about my players, what they're doing. We're not doing much. We're

not able to do a whole lot anymore.

Duke is a great, great program. It's a great challenge for us to play them. We're excited about it. We want to be the best team. We want to play the best teams. That's how you get there.

Q. How exciting is it to have C.J. back with a new journey into a new conference, and Baye as well?

COACH BOEHEIM: I think it's important. We try to develop players. You're going to lose some guys, that's just college basketball. But a key for us over the years is to have some senior leadership.

We've got two great seniors, C.J. Fair, Baye, they've been in the tournament games, NCAA finals, they've been there. It's important to have that kind of leadership, particularly with the challenges of how good this league is going to be this year.

Q. Expectations this year after the Final Four run last year, the fact you're entering a conference with even more competition, the challenge of that, trying to do it again. C.J. Fair said the goal is trying to finish the job.

COACH BOEHEIM: You start every year, you want to be the best you can be. If you're anywhere in the top 30 teams in the country, you think you can get to the Final Four. Reality is, you can. That's the way college basketball is now.

Things change. I mean, we lost four out of five games during the year. I think people were hoping we were going to win a game in the tournament. A notable expert picked us to lose to Montana. That's just the way basketball is. If you're a good team, you're going to go through some ups and downs.

Everybody wants to be in a tough league, play great games. They want you to win every game. That's not the way it works.

If you're in a great league, you play a tough schedule, you're going to lose. You don't plan it, but it's how you come out, how you turn out as a team at the end of the year.

Last year, even though we lost late, we got it together and went to New York, had a good tournament, then we played great in the NCAA tournament. Played our best basketball.

I think that's really what you're trying to do. Everybody's trying to do that. There's just more of an opportunity now if you do play well at the end of the year to have success at the end of the year.

Q. Going from the Big East to the ACC, are you anticipating a big change in the style of play?

COACH BOEHEIM: Not really. I think style of play is so similar. There's always going to be some differences in how people play. Some will press, some will play a little more aggressive man-to-man. There will be fast-break teams. There will be teams that will be patient, halfcourt teams. That's what you see every year.

You play 13 non-conference games, you see 13 different teams. You're going to see different types of styles all the time in those games.

Then in the conference, within the conference, you're going to have different styles.

At the end of the day, that's what college basketball is. Coaches and players adjust pretty quickly to what they have to face. I mean, you get in the NCAA tournament at the end of the year, hopefully you're going to play four, five, six games. There are going to be all different kinds of teams.

By playing different kinds of teams during the year, that's what gets you ready to be a good tournament team, that you've seen different styles, so when you get in that situation you're ready for it, you're more prepared for it.

Q. How do you evaluate the backcourt? You have a freshman point guard, then some questions at the two guard spot.

COACH BOEHEIM: I think that's the first basketball question I've actually had. Took seven, eight hours (laughter).

We have a very experienced frontline. I think it's a better frontline than we had last year. I think we're better, more physical, a year older, got mostly the same guys. We have a couple freshmen that can contribute on our frontline. It's the deepest, best frontline I think I've coached in a long time, let's put it that way.

Our back court I think is talented, but it is very young, very inexperienced. I've started four freshmen point guards since I've been the head coach the Syracuse. I'm as comfortable with this point guard as any of the point guards I've started. I've had some pretty good ones.

I've had a couple sophomores that made All-American after not playing as freshmen, so they really were kind of freshmen. Sherman Douglas, Michael Carter-Williams.

I think at the two, we've got a lot of competition at that spot. You're looking at two

guys, Trevor Cooney had his second year, (indiscernible) is in his third year. I think they may not have been ready as sophomores, but this year they are ready to play. That's the area that we have the most questions about in terms of our team.

With our frontline of C.J. Fair, Baye, those guys, they've all gotten better. I think they'll all be ready to go.

Q. Steve Donahue was in here before you. He said this has the potential to be the best conference ever created. Would you agree with that?

COACH BOEHEIM: You know, I don't usually like to make those statements. I mean, in the past I've always said that the league that I was in was one of the best leagues. I've always said that. I don't know if I've ever said it's the best league. I may have used that word. One year, when we had 11 teams in the tournament, I think you could probably say that was the best league in the country.

Certainly potentially this league has every chance to be the best basketball league ever. I think that's true. But I still kind of think let's go out and prove it rather than talk about it. But certainly this league has that kind of potential.

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate you coming through. Good luck this season.

COACH BOEHEIM: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH TONY BENNETT

JEFF FISCHER: We're joined by Virginia head coach Tony Bennett.

You have built up an incredible amount of depth and experience for this team. I'm wondering how all these guys are going to get the minutes this year.

COACH BENNETT: I think that will be certainly an issue. The one thing that I think a formula for success for us at Virginia is to have a team that has some maturity. I always envisioned us to have superior upperclassmen so you can compete against the best in the league. We haven't been able to do that as fast as we would have liked with transfers.

We do have a couple of seniors, juniors. Now you have to find playing time. You want that competitiveness in practice. With fouls, with injuries, things like that, you need depth. I think that will be very important for our success this year.

JEFF FISCHER: Questions.

Q. You are picked to finish fourth this year by the media. Seems like the expectations are higher for you this year. Do you sense that? How do you balance that with your players?

COACH BENNETT: I mean, the predictions, that's nice. It means you're going to have a chance to try to prove that, to be a quality team in this league. I think there has to be a balance. I think you have to have expectations to finish well, to get to post-season play, all those things.

In saying that, there better be a balance of, we use the term 'falling in love with the process.' How do you reach those expectations, get as good

as you can? That's improving each moment of every day. Our players understand that.

Rick Carlisle told our players, he said, Listen, Justin Anderson, if I run a last-second shot for you, what are you thinking about? If you're thinking, I got to make the shot, you're thinking all wrong. You have to think about your balance, your footwork. The by-product is if you make it or not. If you're a team that has some more expectations, if you're so focused on the end result, you're going down the wrong path. You better compete daily, improve, hold each other accountable. When you face some adversity, how you respond to that is going to determine how successful you'll be.

We've worked hard to get our program to where we have experience and depth. In this league, you better be good or you're going to be in trouble because of the additions of the teams, the qualities of coaches in the ACC.

JEFF FISCHER: Joe Harris, the returning first-team all-ACC guy. One behind C.J. Fair. What is the next step he took in the off-season to improve his game even more.

COACH BENNETT: I think good players have the ability to go to take it to another level, go to the next gear. I think Joe showed that at times last year. I also think the opposite of that, a good player, their lows around that low. Maybe they're off with a shooting night or something is not quite right. Their play never dips too low.

I think when you're a senior, you're one of the better players, your highs can be elite, but your lows, they don't go too low. I think that consistency that you're looking for, then just fine-tuning little thing is what hopefully Joe will add to this year's play.

JEFF FISCHER: Between Joe, Akil and Justin, you have a variety of experience. That's got to stabilize that team heading into the season.

COACH BENNETT: There's no substitute for experience in this league. As I said at the beginning, I think Virginia has to do it with maturity, with guys who have been in a lot of games, that

have seen it. That's a great equalizer to maybe going against guys that have a ton of McDonald's All-Americans, such high-level talent.

We have talented players. When they're mature and they really play together, have that kind of chemistry, then you can be very difficult to beat.

JEFF FISCHER: On Twitter, the hashtag swoon.

COACH BENNETT: I heard about that today. He met Taylor Swift.

JEFF FISCHER: Joe being as good as he is, it becomes fun not only to have a guy like that on the team, but Akil admitted he's the biggest swoon fan.

COACH BENNETT: I sent him to the barber that cuts my hair. Once he got that good haircut, it all went up for him.

JEFF FISCHER: It's all about the hair.

COACH BENNETT: That's right.

Q. You mentioned the new additions to the ACC. How much tougher do those teams make this conference? Can this be one of the best conferences ever?

COACH BENNETT: I think to me, when you determine what's the best conference in college basketball, there has to be two things present.

I think the first one is are there teams that can contend for a national championship. I think you have to check that box off and say, yeah, there are. There's that in other leagues. But the other thing is, how good is the middle of the league, how good is the depth from the bottom up. When you look at the quality of depth in this league with all the teams, the winning percentages, all that stuff, you can say for sure on that account, too.

When you have those two things present, I don't know if there's another league in the country that can boast that. I think that's what will give us the chance to be the best in the league.

Again, it will all be played out. All these pre-season predictions, all this talk about what's the best, we'll find out soon enough. That's the best place to determine it.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH BENNETT: I'm left-handed, so that's a no-brainer. Maybe back in the day. I don't know if that's a big feather in my cap. I haven't seen the other coaches shoot much. That's very flattering.

I just want my team to be the best shooting team. We don't have Johnny Dawkins in this league. He plays at Stanford. I don't know the playing background. Leonard Hamilton said he would be the best defender.

I'll take my chances if I'm a betting man on that one.

JEFF FISCHER: Let's talk about the defense. You guys play an incredibly tough brand of defense. It goes to not only how hard you play on defense, but also the pace you play. How do players adapt to that style and how open are they when they first come there?

COACH BENNETT: I think that's one of the things. When we are good defensively, I think more teams are really getting serious about how good they are defensively, and that actually probably lowers the possessions in the game and points as you're seeing that on a national average in college basketball.

I think it's a great equalizer. I really do. Even as you watch the playoffs in baseball, other sports, you can't just be great defensively and not be that good offensively or vice versa. There has to be a balance.

But I think it gives you a chance to be in games, to be competitive first, then successful. I've just seen it work. Again, it's not the most glamorous, but it's effective. I think you got to start there. Hopefully as you get more talent and ability, you can branch out offensively.

JEFF FISCHER: How did you and your father before you develop that pack line defenses?

COACH BENNETT: My father grew up matching Vince Lombardi. He'd go to their practices. His defensive philosophy, he named it because he was in Green Bay, the Packers. It's about packing the lane, not stretching. It went well with the Packers. It's not that he invented it, it's just a sound philosophy.

At the time I was playing for him, he made a shift that benefited his personnel. Any coach looks and says, What is going to give us the best chance to beat the best teams in our conference. It's a system that's based on working people work. It doesn't disrupt, you're not turning people over, but it's kind of a battle of wills. Whoever can out last the other opponent with positioning, it's team oriented, wins the battle.

JEFF FISCHER: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH JAMES JOHNSON

THE MODERATOR: My pleasure to introduce a veteran coach in the league, Virginia Tech's James Johnson.

You've been asked this all day. What is it like welcoming three new teams into a conference?

COACH JOHNSON: It just made my job a little tougher. I've known those guys throughout the business. Very good programs. National power programs. We're looking forward to it. More excitement. Definitely makes the league stronger.

THE MODERATOR: Let's take questions.

Q. You were a rookie this time last year. You have a season under your belt. What did you learn season one that's going to help you?

COACH JOHNSON: I don't know if it will help me, but I learned this is a tough league. A lot of good players, a lot of good coaches.

I think with my team, we had a tale of two seasons. We started out really good, then we kind of struggled during ACC play.

I think maintaining a positive attitude, maintaining the same work ethic coming in with my young men, those guys look at me, they see what type of mood I'm in, where I'm at, they kind of feed off me.

Q. Has it been real difficult finding how you're going to replace Erick Green?

COACH JOHNSON: Obviously Erick Green was big for us. He did a lot of different things for us. Leading the nation in scoring, ACC Player of the Year. We're not really trying to replace him. I don't know if we have a guy that's going to lead the nation in scoring. I don't know if

anybody in this league will. We didn't know that sitting here last year either.

But we do have some guys that I think could help fill the scoring board and put the basketball in the hole. I think we'll be a much more balanced team this year. One of the things we're trying to do is we're trying to be a better defensive team. Hopefully that will lead to a better offense.

Q. You have two seniors on the team this year. How are they stepping up and taking over as far as leadership goes?

COACH JOHNSON: I think with those two seniors, with me being a first-year coach last year, them playing under me for the first time, they were like newer guys last year also.

They're leading by example. They know what I like, how I am. They're kind of leading by example. We've had some younger guys step up and take more of a leadership role, which is something that is pleasant to see as a head coach. That's a good thing to have. I think our team becomes stronger that way.

Q. You think pretty highly of Ben Emelogu to bring him here. Named him one of the leaders on the team. What has he done that's impressed you so much? Were you surprised he was able to come in and be as successful as he has been?

COACH JOHNSON: He's just done everything right. He's a natural leader. Coming in, I didn't have to put anything on him. He came in, natural leadership qualities, leadership abilities. He earned the respect of the guys right away from day one with his play, with his talking.

He plays both ends of the floor. He does everything right on and off the floor. Just a pleasant surprise to have.

His coach in the recruiting process spoke very highly of him, his leadership abilities. When you come in as a freshman, you have a couple seniors, juniors that have been in the program,

college atmosphere, it takes a special individual to step right in and kind of have the team be his, and Ben has done that.

Q. You finished up the bottom of the ACC last season with the nation's leading scorer. Where have you set the goals for your team this season?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I think we talk about it every day. We just want to get better every day. We want to take a step forward every day.

You're either getting better or getting worse, you're never staying the same. I don't know if that's a goal or not, but that's something that we talk to the guys about every day. How good we can be, we're not sure yet. We have some uncertainties, who is going to step up and do what. But we do want to get better every single day in practice, every day in film session, every day in the weight room. We just want to get better. Hopefully as the season goes on, we'll become a much better team.

THE MODERATOR: When you talk about a guy like Erick Green, the other four guys on the court will watch him make plays. When you return seven of your nine leading scorers, does it give you an opportunity to grow your offense?

COACH JOHNSON: I don't know if it gives us a chance to grow it, but it gives us a lot of balance. There are certain nights out there, Erick Green did what he was able to do, then we had guys, like you said, standing around watching where I wanted them to get involved in the game.

I think we've got some guys that will get themselves involved in the game, whether it's on the offensive glass, making plays for themselves. That will be hopefully something that we don't have to worry about.

THE MODERATOR: The commissioner was standing here talking about the length of the ACC tournament. When you look at the season as a whole, do you break it down to the non-conference portion and then look ahead to the deeper parts of the schedule? How do you dedicate all your energies to prepping those games but keeping your eye on the long season ahead?

COACH JOHNSON: We take it one game at a time. We take each game as a separate entity. We want to treat upstate like we do Duke or any other team. Our team preparation is the same in practice. We don't look ahead too much. That's one of the things that we were able to get off to a

good start last season. We didn't look too far ahead. We took one game at a time.

I think we want to continue to do that, one day at a time, even in practice.

THE MODERATOR: Do the student-athletes do that? How do you tell the guys not to look ahead, but focus on some of the non-conference teams? Do they really do that?

COACH JOHNSON: I think with a freshmen group, they don't know any better. They're out there with stars in their eyes trying to do exactly what they're told to do when they're told to do it. A lot of times they're late doing that.

The upperclassmen, they know the grind of the season. They know how you have to take it, day to day, step by step. They've been through it. I don't think they're looking forward too much. We're concentrating on our first game.

Q. Bringing in a team like Syracuse, Jim Boeheim, what can you say about what you know about coach, going up against him this season?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I mean, his career speaks for itself. We just brought in one of the best coaches in the history of college basketball into the league. We're fortunate to have them in our league, fortunate to be coaching in the ACC, have a chance to coach against him. We're looking forward to them coming into Blacksburg this year.

All the new teams in the league, well-respected coaches, great programs. They're going to be trying to do the same thing that we're going to try to do. They're working hard getting ready for the season. They're going to try to beat us when we play them and we're going to try to work hard and beat them.

THE MODERATOR: Going into your second season, what is the one thing you take away?

COACH JOHNSON: With hard work, that's something I've done all of my career. I think if we keep our nose to the grind, keep working hard, I think things will fall in place.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much. Best of luck to you this season.

COACH JOHNSON: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports



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October 16, 2013



An interview with:

COACH JEFF BZDELIK

JEFF FISCHER: We're joined by Wake Forest head coach Jeff Bzdelik.

You have a lot of continuity. You lose C.J. Harris, but everyone in the starting lineup is back.

COACH BZDELIK: It's a great place to start. 62% of our minutes last year were played by freshmen. They gained valuable experience. Of course, we have Travis McKie, we can't forget him, who has played and started every game, averaged about 30 minutes per game since his freshman year. He has great, great experience.

There's no substitute for experience. We had some great wins last year, some real close, tough losses. Our team has really grown through that experience. They're stronger physically, tougher mentally. They've grown together as a basketball team.

I'm very excited.

JEFF FISCHER: We'll start with questions.

Q. In talking to your players earlier, they said you're so much more relaxed this year. They said the seven freshmen last year made you a little bit grumpy. Are you feeling more relaxed this year?

COACH BZDELIK: No question. I'm very relaxed. Very excited. Very confident. Last year, my approach with those freshmen, I had to shell-shock them because they needed to play. I told them, I'm going to be really tough on you because you have no idea what's in store for you. They didn't. If you ask them that, they'll tell you.

Once they've been around the block now, they understand what I was trying to explain to them, how tough you need to be, how tough-minded you need to be, not just physically but tough-minded, in an individual way and

collective way as a team to survive and win, like we all want to win in this league.

They understand that. They're working extremely hard. So, yeah, I'm very relaxed, feel very confident. I feel great about this group.

Q. We know you're excited about your depth. What specifically makes you excited about that?

COACH BZDELIK: Well, depth is our asset, to be quite frank. We have 10 strong players right now. When Greg McClinton, very close to coming back, a talented freshman who is very athletic, that's going to give us even another player. We have length, depth.

It doesn't matter what combination of groups of guys I put out there, they've all been very efficient in practice. So we're going to utilize that depth and try and wear on people in terms of great, great energy at all times from all spots.

Q. Tyler Cavanaugh, we saw a little bit of him last year. What do you expect out of him?

COACH BZDELIK: Tyler has worked extremely hard. Coach Boeheim told me, Jeff, he was always in our gym. He thought he was one of his own players. Tyler is just a workaholic.

Here is an example of that. Tyler came in as a freshman, 231 pounds, almost 13% body fat. Today he's 231 pounds, 6% body fat. He's changed his body in terms of losing about 15 pounds. If you work that into an equation, eight to ten pounds of muscle. He's moving better as an athlete. He can shoot the ball. He's very skilled. He's one of our best post-up player. Shooting the three, he's really, really good.

He's a hard-working young man who is skilled, intelligent. He's changed his body. He's going to be a tough matchup for fours in that he's a stretch four kind of guy but also can go in the post. We're really excited about him.

Q. Talked to Travis earlier. With all the experience that the freshmen picked up last year, and he's a senior, is this the year for a guy like him that this team needs to kick the door in and get to 20, 22, 23 wins, make a post-season appearance?

COACH BZDELIK: No question. We need to continue to show improvement and to win. I have a dual responsibility as a coach. One responsibility is to win. I get that. That's the bottom line in this business. But the second responsibility is to protect the integrity of the university and have the true student-athletes. We've done that. There can't be a trade-off between one or the other.

Getting back to Tyler Cavanaugh, all-ACC, all-academic player, too. In fact, we had about five of them. The only problem there was, their GPAs were higher than their scoring averages. I'm making a joke about that.

You know, we need to have a winning year. Playing the type of schedule that we have, that will put us in consideration for post-season play somewhere, no doubt.

Q. Do you feel like this is a make-or-break year for you personally?

COACH BZDELIK: You know what, nobody puts any more pressure on me than I put on myself. We had the fourth best attendance in the ACC last year. We have great fan support. Fans were awesome. We had some great home wins because of our fans, really and truly.

I want to win desperately. I want to win as badly as anybody. That's the plan. That's what we need to do.

Q. Coach, you went small quite a bit last year. Do you anticipate that with the three-guard thing? Bigger? Combination of things?

COACH BZDELIK: Great question about playing small, playing big. We have the versatility to do both. Andre Washington has made great strides. He came in at 215 pounds. He's every bit of 235 right now, playing very well. Going against Devin Thomas every day. Devin has brought out the best in him.

We can go big, we can go small. We can play Tyler at the five, who is a handful because of his ability to shoot the basketball. That was successful for us last year at times.

We have that versatility. We'll use it accordingly throughout the course of games and see which one is more effective.

Q. Harris meant so much to you guys, now he's gone. Is he replaced by one or committee? Is there somebody on the rise to be the next C.J.?

COACH BZDELIK: It's a great question and something that as a coach, in our big wins, C.J. was awesome, he really was. There's no doubt about that.

Codi Miller-McIntyre just said recently many times last year he deferred. Now it's time for all these young guys to rise up in a collective way and through committee, as you said so well, we should overcome the loss of a great player like C.J. Harris, who was very consistent for us.

JEFF FISCHER: First practice this season, what is the first thing you do? What tone do you set right off the bat for this team?

COACH BZDELIK: Toughness. We need to get tougher from the neck up. What is toughness? Toughness is imposing your will, a firm determination to succeed.

Our players learned from last year how important every possession is. We lost one game by two, a game by three, a game by four, a game by five, a game by six. Would have, could have, should have don't count. My point is understanding how valuable each possession is.

In practice, everything we do has a consequence because one loose ball, one missed block off assignment, one defensive mistake from anybody, it takes all five players to make a play, has a consequence, and that could be a tough loss.

In practice what we've done is emphasize every little thing to perfection so we practice perfectly.

JEFF FISCHER: Do you get the feeling with this team everybody is onboard?

COACH BZDELIK: No question.

Q. The margin for error, is that a tough spot for a coach to be in, knowing that guys, it's vital that each possession is valued so highly? The margin for winning and losing is a minute.

COACH BZDELIK: Not just our program, but any program. I'm not sure what the exact stat is. I think the differential in college basketball is

really just like a possession and a half throughout an average for the country. It's what makes it such a great game, it really does.

We just want to control what we can control, and that's just a total effort. What is defensive transition? Effort. What is running the court? Effort. On offense, cutting hard, jumping into position defensively, being aware, being focused, just selling out for your teammates, to get out of yourself and into other people in terms of a team concept, that's what we're getting at.

If you do that, come up short, you know what, so be it. Life doesn't always go the way you want it to go. Strap it on, next play, whatever.

But you can't have some letdowns. Young players, when they come to this level, they're so good, they can take possessions off in high school. That's what they don't understand. They can let somebody catch the ball. I'll block it anyway. You can't let a guy like Plumlee catch the ball, for example. A guy like Devin Thomas learned that. That's where experience comes in.

JEFF FISCHER: Thank you very much.

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