

October 16, 2007



An Interview With:

BONNIE HENRICKSON

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Bonnie Henrickson. Welcome, Coach, if you'd like to make a few opening comments.

BONNIE HENRICKSON: Good morning, it's hard to believe we're back at it already. At Kansas we are excited about our opportunity to build and grow on our quality finish. We had a strong finish last year, and with a trip to Australia under our belt and those practice days and four days of competition, we're excited about. We have some young talent from last year that's improved, putting in the time and effort to individually improve, it will help us be a better basketball team, and excited about some young freshman, big freshman that are a little bit bigger. We added speed and athleticism and size, and a young lady that can shoot the ball well and pretty deep. With us being able to mix those young kids in, I've got a reputation of playing young kids, and they're excited about that. We have a chance to make an immediate impact. It's important for us to get better every day. Our kids are excited, they should be. I have great respect for how good the league is. It always has been and will continue to be this year.

Q. How helpful will the overseas trip be, do you think?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: It gave us, for the staff, a sneak peek at the improvement the players had made from the summer. Obviously working with them in the spring, we knew we made progress in the spring, and it gave us a better, clearer picture of exactly where we were going to focus in August and September. And just the camaraderie of the trip, the competitive advantage, we feel we made the ten practice days and full games -- I think it's been a jump start and will be a great motivation and energy tool for us. And the kids have been awfully excited and make reference

to practices, and even for us just the experience in those young kids, even four more games and ten more practice days, it makes a difference. The worst part is you can't take the freshman, but that's just a reality.

Q. Speaking of freshmen, you guys have such a young roster, how trying has that been, you try to work with them?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: It's been good. It's been nice, we only have three freshmen. And they were great kids last year, but 7 freshmen is 7 freshmen, so to only have three has been refreshing. Not that that's been -- it has been complicated some days, the sheer amount of just having to fix the little things, and all the little things that freshmen do that drive you crazy, we haven't had much of that.

But in the short-term, when we played all those young kids last year, it was painful, to be honest with you. But for the growth of the program it was the best thing to do, to let them play, gain experience, throw them in the fire, ask them how hot it is and learn and grow. And for those sophomores, some of those kids, Kelly has junior experience now, or late sophomore experience having played so much her freshman year.

Q. With such a tough non-conference schedule and still a pretty young team how do you avoid falling into a rut right before the Big 12 play?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: We have to grow in two areas. We have to become tougher, we have to become more disciplined. Had we been tougher and more disciplined, having 7 freshman might be asking a lot for last year, we have to grow to have a better non-conference record. We needed to gain confidence. When you look back at it, and it was difficult to be close a lot of times, not being able to finish, but I will give the kids credit last year about their resiliency. But we have to play the non-conference like we did how we finished last year. But to do that we have to have somebody step up and bring what mostly did.

That's the anxiety that I have about who is going to step up and be that person to push us and lead us and step up and be a finisher. But we've got those two areas, toughness and discipline help us.

Q. Talk a little bit Nicollette Smith, and what she's going to bring to this program, and how quickly --

BONNIE HENRICKSON: She shoots it quick and deep. She's going to have to play post defense, but she can shoot it deep and quick like Emily did. And in this case let it be here for that reason. And especially as we put Danielle McCray back at the guard position, which Danielle played the power forward, and got as many three point attempts, but we want to be able to space someone at that position, and Nicollette will be able to do that.

Q. Two questions, one is of last year's freshmen, can you tell which one has maybe made the biggest jump to sophomore, and what do you expect from the 6-5 kid from Canada?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: For the sophomores, going into -- finishing our trip to Australia, Morris and Weddington were the two most improved. And McCray is not like she's improved, but she's playing a different position now. More importantly being guarded by different people. She had an advantage last year, because we ran a lot of things to keep her on the perimeter and she was guarded by post players. Now she's on the perimeter guarded by perimeter players. She has gotten better, but I don't see the significant growth in how she's grown. And then Krysten Boogaard, from Saskatchewan, Canada, actually graduated from high school in two years, she was in our basketball academy, and with the Canadian National Team, similar to what the Australian Institute of Sports has done. So for a 6-5 kid another year of training, working, I think has shown significant growth in her physically, and already significant growth when we got her on campus in August. She played internationally in summer, she was not on campus in June and July, which would have helped us even more. But we made the commitment to let her play, and she'll play every summer with the national program. She's legitimately 6-5. She's long, she's lanky, she's in the middle of the pack when we run sprints, she's not last by any stretch of the imagination. She's a physical kid, she's going to get stronger in our strength and physical -- she has two brothers that play NHL and one that's a fighter,

so she knows how to throw the elbows around a little bit. She's still a little lean. She's got great -- her body composition is great, she's a lean kid, but is she a freshman? Yeah. She looks like a freshman, and some of those upper post players like to make her look like a freshman. We just played little all year last year, but it will be nice to go back to some of those things we ran last year.

Q. Could you comment on Courtney Paris, as a player, in the Big 12 and for women's college basketball?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: Absolutely. She's been that next level, that elite player, for a young lady that has that size and athleticism, it's skill and competitiveness, she's made our league better, she set the standard in our league, she changes how a lot of us recruit. She changed about the type of player we bring in to play against her and the size we might need. Nationally she's opened a lot of eyes about a person of that size and physicalness and that kind of skill and finesse. She's represented our league well. She's a great sportsman, great competitiveness, has respect for the game. From the minute you see her until she walks out she is a great thing for the university but the league, as well.

Q. Obviously everybody knows about Marsha being gone and Jody being gone. Can you talk about what it means for the types of coaches that are now being brought into this thing over the last few years?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: Our conference has become a destination league. You have three coaches that took teams to Final Fours that left the programs to join the Big 12. It speaks volumes about the commitment in our league, the quality of coaches in our league, and the administrators, and certainly the talent we have in our conference. I don't know that that's happened anywhere in our country.

Q. Why do you think that, is it here, the midwest, our part of the country?

BONNIE HENRICKSON: I think you've got committed athletic directors. I have the best athletic director there is in women's basketball, and he didn't pay me to say that. He sets the bar high. And I believe in his commitment and to be quite honest that's why I'm at Kansas. He's not the only one. He's in great company. The commitment is

how you fund the program, about facilities, about resources to make sure your student athletes have all the resources to graduate. From the minute those kids get up in the morning until they go to bed they are treated first class, and that draws great athletes to your league. Great players want to play with great players, against great players, they want to play in front of a thousands of people and they get to do that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...