

October 16, 2007



An Interview With:

CONNIE YORI

PETER IRWIN: We're ready to start with Coach Connie Yori from Nebraska. Welcome, Coach. If you'd like to make an opening comment or two and then we'll take questions.

CONNIE YORI: Well, sure. Again, just like all coaches we come up here on October 16th and we're all excited about what we're doing and excited about our teams. And I'm right there with the rest of them. I'm very excited about this basketball team. I think we're really different. We're very different than what we've been. Different doesn't mean better, necessarily, different doesn't mean worse, we're just different. I really like our team. I like our character. I like our work habits. I like our intensity. I like our chemistry. The only thing we're lacking, which is pretty obvious, is that we're lacking experience.

We return just one player who's ever started a game. We have one senior in our program. We have one returning junior, we're extremely inexperienced. We haven't been through the wars of the Big 12 yet and the battles of some of the non-conference opponents we're going to see. But at the same time I like this team because I think we're talented and we work hard. They always say there's no substitute for experience, but we're going to have to find a substitute. We're going to have to work harder than other teams, we're going to have to have chemistry.

Q. You're in your 6th season now at Nebraska. Do you see this being the toughest in the Big 12 as far as balance?

CONNIE YORI: Every year is tough. It's incredible. This is the top league in terms of coaching in the nation for women's basketball. It's not getting any easier with the additions that we've had this year. I think more and more programs are committed to our great sport and women's

basketball and therefore there's extraordinary balance. You can go through, and I think last year is a great example of K State, K State finished near the bottom of our league. And they almost won the WNIT. I don't think there's any league in the country who can put forth the depth of great teams that we can. I think this year is no different.

Q. There's a lot of turmoil in the administration, what effect do you think this might have on your performance?

CONNIE YORI: Turmoil? You're talking about what happened yesterday? I thought you were talking about the weather. We don't think there's going to be any impact on the program. Our focus is to continue to move this program forward. That's our focus, that's our staff's focus. We expect that to happen. We're going to continue to practice. We're going to continue to work hard in the area of recruiting. This is a tumultuous profession. We know that, but if you get distracted by everything that's going around you, I think you're taking the wrong course. So we're going to stay true to the course.

Q. You've only got one player who started a game before. I assume there is a point in the previous season at which you and your staff realize that's probably going to be the case in the following season. Tell me about the conversation about that. Do you ever discuss maybe we ought to give some of these guys a little bit more experience, if for no other reason than for the sake of next year?

CONNIE YORI: Well, we do have experience. We do have some kids in our program that have experience, they just haven't been to the starting lineup. We were in a cycle in our program where we had a big freshman class and a big sophomore class. Our freshmen got experience last year, but not from a starting position.

Q. Tell me a little bit about how those can be adjusted over time or is that something you just have to learn to deal with, because

we've got a similar situation, I'm in Columbia now where they have one senior on the entire team and they brought her off of the volleyball team. I wonder if the temptation is there to maybe hold off a scholarship or two in one year to make sure you don't have a year where there's just nobody at the top or no freshmen?

CONNIE YORI: I think it depends on where you are in your program, sir. Danielle's class, we took the program over five years ago. Really Danielle's class was our first recruiting class and I signed some junior college kids that year. We had played with five scholarship players the last year. We weren't worried about scholarship numbers, we had plenty of scholarships to give, but there weren't too many that wanted to come when we finished last in the Big 12. Thank goodness Danielle Page was one of them.

Q. From a competitive perspective how much difference is there between A&M and OU from the rest of the conference?

CONNIE YORI: That's a very good question. I guess we're going to find out as we get going. Obviously A&M, the number of not only the number of starters they returned and the amount of experience they returned but also the quality of experience that they returned I think sets them apart because of that. But Oklahoma and the players they returned, and they've got a pretty good player in the program, I think you guys have heard about her, Courtney Paris, I believe. So obviously those two teams are programs that we are all working towards catching. But at the same time I think there's going to be great battles in our league, night in and night out. And we think that we can compete and we think that -- obviously Baylor has been in that mix. We got Baylor in our home court, and we played great basketball against Oklahoma on our home court. There's a lot of programs here that are going to put forth great efforts to play those teams.

Q. Some openings popped up in schools in the region. I expected Coach Ethridge's name to come up on the short list. Can you talk a little bit about her contributions to the program because that's got to be -- as far as assistant coaches that's somebody that has one of the longest tenures?

CONNIE YORI: Kamie has been part of that program and been with them long and they've put some great teams on the floor. I do think her name has been mentioned. She's been in the mix

in some positions, from what I understand. And I'm probably the last one to ask about rumors, because I never know what's going on. But I think Kamie, from what everyone says, she's a very disciplined coach who is a great recruiter, and who also obviously as a former player, the level that she played at, brings something from that standpoint, as well.

Q. You mentioned the strength of the coaching in the Big 12. What is it that you think makes it such a destination?

CONNIE YORI: I think Dru Hancock has everything to do with it. Our league is just -- it's obviously a nationally recognized league. What this league has done the last 10 or 11 years here, in terms of the attendance and the focus in the communities, in the Big 12 communities, I think the fact that for the most part our communities are smaller communities in the Big 12. I think there's -- it's a rallying point for the -- athletics is a rallying point for those communities. I think anytime that you can go to a college type of town, I think it's great from a coaching standpoint because you're going to get support. You're probably going to have attendance and draw better. It's just -- I think it's really interesting where our coaches have come from. And it's obviously that -- I think there's a lot of coaches who like the challenge of coming to the Big 12. We've had coaches that have left the SEC and the Big East and the Big Ten and so on and so forth.

Q. Coach Fennelly said he noticed changes in his profession, and one of them being that money is a bigger factor now in women's basketball than it used to be, the need to produce revenue and bring in money which of course translates to more pressure to win. He said women's basketball used to be immune from that, is the word he used. Have you noticed that?

CONNIE YORI: I think all of us have noticed that, particularly in our league. The question asked before, and as I continue really to respond to the earlier question, obviously greater attendance, greater focus on women's basketball in a given community, therefore there is more emphasis placed on that sport. And with that being said, salaries are higher, and AD's are wanting to go out and hire outstanding coaches, which across the board we have. And the

combination of --

I think the Big 12, the communities that we are in in the Big 12 promotes community interest and therefore we draw better. And therefore the emphasis is greater in our programs and therefore there is more of a pressure to do well. And therefore the AD's want to go out and hire great coaches. And I think it's definitely a snowball effect.

PETER IRWIN: They've let you off easy this afternoon.

CONNIE YORI: I like it, let's go back to Lincoln.

PETER IRWIN: Wish you luck. Thanks a lot.

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