

October 16, 2007



An Interview With:

KURT BUDKE

PETER IRWIN: It's now time for Oklahoma State, Coach Kurt Budke. Welcome, Coach.

KURT BUDKE: Thank you. It's great to be here in Kansas City. This is definitely one of my old homes. This is one of the places I started my coaching career, two years when I was at Kansas City Community College. My daughter was born here. I think this is where I learned how to eat barbecue right here. I think I counted one time, there was 93 barbecue places in Kansas City, and I think I ate at 60 of them.

I missed Kansas City. It's a great place. We're definitely excited to be here, since this year we are higher, not being picked 12th, being picked 5th. I heard someone say that we went from being the hunter to the hunted. And that's probably true. But when you look at our conference, I think after the top two people in the division who were picked one and two, I think three through 12, you could mix that up any way you want to mix it, because I think our conference is the strongest, 1 through 12 in the country.

Q. You've had some time to let that sink in, what you guys did, going from, when you thought about that three or four months later, what came to your mind and how gratifying and satisfying was that?

KURT BUDKE: Honestly, I've had my share of great wins in my career. What we did last year with that team, unless you've lived through an 0-16 conference record, it's tough. There's just no way to even understand what we went through, when you've won your whole life, and then to go from that to the NCAA tournament, obviously it says a lot about my assistant coaches. It says a lot about the great job that they did to go out -- try to go out and recruit to an 0-16 program in the Big 12 and see how easy that is. But my assistant

coaches did an unbelievable job and we upgraded the talent. We were 5-8 last year, and we had to win at Texas, home against No. 25 Nebraska and at Kansas State, all three not very easy places to play. And the kids kept believing and felt good about what they were doing and we pulled it off and we got in. Even as coaches -- it was the very last second when we realized that we did have a chance for the NCAA tournament. We had a big party last year on selection day, and we had a couple hundred people come. And we didn't know if we were going to be in the tournament or not. We knew it was quite a gamble to do that, but we still wanted to celebrate the turnaround of what the girls did. When they put Oklahoma State up on the board, I promise you there was no bigger reaction in America than there was in that room that night.

Q. The last months afterwards, what do you sense it meant to Oklahoma State as a school? A very basketball tradition-rich program, and it's in your state where Sherri's team gets all the publicity?

KURT BUDKE: Sherri who? No, I mean obviously it got us on the map a little bit. We were able to go in kids' homes now -- the year before we went in the homes and said we're going to turn this around. Now we can show that we're in the NCAA tournament, we turned it quicker than we thought. And it meant a lot for us in recruiting this year across the nation, when you win as an NCAA tournament team. It obviously opens doors.

Have we got the top ten recruits in America to come to Oklahoma State? No. But at least part of them watched us on the NCAA tournament. Oklahoma State is a very proud basketball school. And women's basketball is something that has just lagged behind here the last couple of years. Those crowds that you see for men's basketball are slowly starting to come and help us a little bit, too. I think that's the next step we have to take as a program is really start filling those seats to be a legitimate top-20 contender.

Q. For a long time Texas A&M and

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Oklahoma State were the two stragglers in the Big 12 South. Gary was able to come in and with a lot of hard work turn that around but a similar coaching style as you. Maybe you don't necessarily have a lot of stars, but have a lot of hard working players that he develops. Can you talk about watching him and what he did in the Big 12 and coming in and trying to do the same thing?

KURT BUDKE: We had the influence of Leon Barmore, and I think if you look at A&M and Baylor, and we're trying to play that way now, a little more aggressive, a little physical, a little more up and down. You'll see the same thing at Texas Tech as they continue to turn that. We use that as motivation for our kids. We talked about Baylor's turnaround and Texas A&M's turnaround, it's not easy but it is possible. And I think it gives you players and your coaches some hope that it can be done.

Gary has done an unbelievable job. And he's very deserving to be picked No. 1 in the conference. With all that talent he has back, he should probably win the national championship. Did he leave yet?

PETER IRWIN: He's going to love that pressure.

Q. Andrea said she didn't get comfortable until about the last three games of last season. Can you talk about how she progressed during the course of her freshman season and what it means -- what you expect from her this season?

KURT BUDKE: I think you go back to this last question of when you look at our teams in the past I've never had anybody jump out and average 20 points a game. And that was hard for her to understand right away that we had to have more people involved if we were going to be good. And she did struggle at times and it was a roller coaster. We knew when we handed the reins over to a freshman point guard, there was no question there was going to be some tough times. But she just kept maturing, kept listening, kept a great attitude the whole way through, and she's never going to doubt herself, that's never going to happen. She's a very confident young lady. What she has to be concerned about this year is everybody talks about sophomore slumps. Well, sophomore slumps happen because freshmen who were kind of under the radar just a little bit as freshmen aren't under the radar anymore. Game plans will be to try to be more aware of her and

what she's doing. But she's worked so hard in the offseason. She puts her time in the gym. She wants to be a great player. I think for us to be better I think we are starting 1, 2 and 3 back, I think all three of them have to be better players this year, and I'm sure they will.

Q. Talk about Courtney Paris. What are your thoughts about that, what kind of player she is and the impact she has?

KURT BUDKE: You can ask every coach in here that question and there's no answer to it. I'm a huge fan of Courtney and she knows that. If she's not the best player in the country then -- she's got great hands. What people don't realize about Courtney, she might be the best passer on the team, too. If you go double or triple or whatever you want to do, she'll find the open person for an easy shot. She is very hard to guard. I'm sure their question mark this year is they did surround her with four great shooters last year, so who is going to step up? Because that's going to change how everybody guards Courtney this year. I don't care what you do to her, you're going to look up at the end of the night she's going to have 20 points, 15 rebound, and get your two posts in foul trouble. She's that good a player. She's very, very special.

PETER IRWIN: We wish you the best of luck for the season.

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