

October 16, 2007



An Interview With:

GAIL GOESTENKORS

PETER IRWIN: We'd like to welcome in the new coach at the University of Texas, Coach Goestenkors. Welcome to the Big 12 and the Big 12 media day.

GAIL GOESTENKORS: It's a great pleasure to be here. I'm so used to the ACC media days, so it feels strange, everything is really a new experience for me. And one that I relish. Coming to Texas from Duke was really one of the most difficult decisions of my life, but I felt like I was ready for a new challenge and new adventure. And I think that's exactly what I'm getting. Every day is a new experience for me. And I love it. So I'm very much looking forward to being in the Big 12 and all of the challenges that we will get along the way.

This conference is just incredible, really from top to bottom. And clearly the fan support is the best in the nation. So I'm looking forward to going into all these -- and I've already heard stories about some of the environments I'm going to go into and the crazy fans. But I love that. That excites me. I've always loved challenges and I feel I have a great challenge and great opportunity here at the University of Texas.

Q. Why did you leave the comfort and security at Duke for a big challenge like coming to Texas?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: Probably because it was comfortable and secure, and I love challenges. I've always been one to kind of push the envelope a little bit, push myself. And I never want to be comfortable. I guess a fear of becoming complacent, I would never want that for myself or my team. When that opportunity came I really had to think do I want to stay at Duke for the rest of my career, which would have been fine, or

do I want one more big challenge on this journey? My life is a journey and that's the way I see it. And I just thought it would be so exciting to really try something entirely new and see if I could help bring Texas back to the greatness that it once had.

Q. Last time you coached another team would have been the 94-95 team. Can you talk about what's that like? It's a different mentality as opposed to starting the season at Duke where you're thinking we're heading for a national championship to, hey, we need to get back in the tournament?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: Yeah, I think it's really about changing the mindset. All the players on this current team, we have one true senior, but not one of those players has ever played in the postseason. So we really need to change almost the culture now. You never want to go too many years without -- well, I always thought getting to the Final Four or winning a championship, because the older kids teach the younger kids what it takes and what it's all about. Right now I'm the teacher, because those kids haven't been there during their careers in Texas. That's the real challenge of our coaching staff is to help them understand very quickly what it takes. And that's why you may have heard some of my players, our motto is walk, talk and act like a champion. In every way every day. Because they have to start thinking about it and acting that way in order for it to happen. So that's really what this year is all about, helping them to learn what it takes for them to be champions.

Q. Up to this point what has been your most rewarding experience in your journey?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: You mean here or in my life?

Q. In your journey. You said your life is a journey.

GAIL GOESTENKORS: Gosh, I've had so many, it's hard to say. I think on the basketball court probably in 1999 when we went to our first

Final Four, and that year we beat Texas in the regional. And that was a state in the game of our program, that was the game that really legitimized our program at Duke. That was the year they had Shamika, Tamika, all the "Meeks," and they won three years in a row, and that was supposed to be their best team. That was one of those David versus Goliath games, and probably one of the best moments of my career. And so I'm hoping to have more of those moments. I had more along the way, but that's the one that stands out to me. I was talking earlier, last year when we beat Tennessee at Tennessee, it was a great crowd, and we won. And I'm just, okay, I felt good after the game, but I didn't have that total sense of just -- total excited and the thrill. And I think that's part of the reason I came, as well, I want to help build, again, I want to feel those moments again, where it's the first time that our players beat Tennessee or the first time that we go to the Final Four and those feelings that accompany that.

Q. Will you talk about if you took over for one of the icons of the game, talk about taking over for Coach Conrad?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: It's an incredible experience to follow Jody. And it was one I was a little leery of. And when I came down for my visit when I was trying to make my decision, I went to lunch with Jody because I just -- it was a concern of mine. And she really -- she made me feel so much better. And she told me that she wanted me to have this job. And she wanted to pass the baton on. I know I'm never going to be Jody Conrad. We have different styles and different personalities and I would be a fool to try. But she wanted me to develop my own legacy here at the University of Texas. So she's been an incredible supporter. She still works at UT. She does a lot of speaking and fundraising, which she loves and she's perfect for. Hopefully that can keep me from having to do quite as much. She's always there if I need her. It's a real sense of comfort for me.

Q. If you are in the NCAA tournament this year, and you were facing Duke, how would you feel?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: I wouldn't feel good at all. We were actually scheduled to play Duke this year and I took it off the schedule because it would just -- I felt it would just be too hard for everybody involved. There are a lot of emotions there. I still feel very close and always will with the team at Duke. So I didn't want to put

any of us through that. I'm hoping that, A, we do make the NCAA tournament and, B, that we do not have to play Duke.

Q. What's the biggest culture shock about moving to Austin after living on the East Coast as long as you have?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: I haven't felt culture shock in Austin. I think probably the first football game I went to was a bit of a shock for us, because at Duke I don't know what we averaged. I'd say probably about 6,000, maybe, 8,000 people at our football games, which was about the same we averaged at our basketball games. So it was quite an experience.

Q. You talked earlier about your role as a teacher to this team. Since you're inheriting a team basically recruited by somebody else in many ways, are you learning about this team?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: Most definitely. It's been a process and it will continue to be a process. I spent most of the summer, when I was here with the team, individually and in individual meetings, just really trying to get to know them as people and what was important to them. And I've always been -- relationships are always the most important thing to me with my team. And so I feel like I'm a better motivator when I know what's important and how each player is best motivated. They're all different and unique. Now that we started practice I'm learning who they are on the court. It's a process and I think it's going to take some time as we go through -- you always learn so much when you go through tough times. As we're going through our schedule and we'll have some wins and some losses, I'm quite sure, and I'll learn more every day about how they respond to some adversity, as well.

Q. You mentioned football. You're coming from an institution where I'm sure everyone would agree basketball is the No. 1 sport. And now you're at a place where I think probably everyone would agree that historically football is the No. 1 sport. Is that going to be an adjustment for you?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: I don't think so. I think what you sell is the success of the programs. And I think what's good at Duke and is great at Texas is all the programs are really very successful. I'm smart enough to know that you sell

what you can. And here at Texas, football is really exciting and there's so many kids that grow up watching Texas football. So if that helps them to want to come to Texas I'm all for it and I'm going to sell our program. Soccer is ranked No. 1. Volleyball is ranked very high. We're selling sports and academics as a whole. That's a really good feeling.

Q. The experience of coaching Courtney Paris, your comment in working with her and her impact as a basketball player in the women's game?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: I love Courtney and I could not say enough great things about her, both as a player and a person. When I coached her in the Under-19s, she's a joy to coach. I'm very envious of Sherri having her for four years because she works hard, but she also makes it fun. She was somebody that all the other players -- she's like a magnet. People just want to be around her because she's very witty. She's funny. She's easy going. She's easy to be around. I enjoyed coaching her.

Having her this summer, it was interesting to see her with an older group. She was the same age on that Under 19 team as most of the other players, but now she's the baby in that national team. There's some dominant personalities. And I was with her when we were in Italy earlier and she didn't say probably two words. And then to have her again when we went to Chile later, I can see her growing, and becoming more comfortable and confident on that national scene, as well, which is really important. It's all about the experiences you have. So she's obviously been a dominant factor in the women's game at the college level, but I think as she continues to gain confidence I think we can see her in a couple of Olympics.

Q. You've looked at where the program is right now, I wonder if you can talk about your initial perceptions, how much work you think will be necessary to bring Texas back to the level it's been in previous years?

GAIL GOESTENKORS: I think we've got some work to do. Like I said, I think changing the mentality is the first task at hand. And that's easier said than done. So -- and then we've got to bring in some more recruits. I think Tiffany Jackson was such a star and a dominant figure in that program for years, she was surrounded then by role players. Now that she's gone we have a lot of role players, but we have no star. And so it's trying to

help those players step out of their comfort zone and step into the light a little bit more. So it's something -- I've told them, I would be excited about the opportunity to really have a new role, but at the same time it's a process. Some people just don't feel comfortable in those starring roles and being the go-to player. I think it's going to take some time to help the players step out of their roles, and also I think we're a little thin, we need to bring in some more talent, some more size. We have one point guard, Carla, so we don't have the depth we'd like at this level.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach. Best of luck this season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...



visit our archives at asapsports.com