

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball TipOff Media Days

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Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Texas A&M Aggies

Coach Bucky McMillan

Men's Media Day Press Conference



BUCKY McMILLAN: Thank y'all for being here. I grew up right here. I mentioned this when I was here last time, literally went to elementary school about a half mile from here, lived in a house about a half mile from here.

I obviously want to thank everybody from that is Mountain Brook that I know because you're part of my journey. Everything that I learned about basketball was here in this city, from an AAU coach to a JV coach to a varsity coach to a college coach. I didn't come up with the term of what we call the way we play basketball, but this city did and now we are playing it out at Texas A&M. It's an awesome place. I hope those that hadn't got to come out there get to come out here.

When I was here at Mountain Brook, I was proud to wear the Bulldog and Spartan on my chest. I feel the same way about Texas A&M. Great place, people of great pride. We want to do some of the same things we did here out there.

I listen to everybody talk at Media Days. Everybody is very optimistic. I wish they would do a media day before the season and after the season. Sometimes you hear a different tone.

I think the truth of the matter is, it's about to be a time for doing, not a time for talking here in a couple weeks. That's the truth. I think you'll find out that the teams that are talking positively at the end of the season, are the teams that had individuals and coaches that were able to overcome the tremendous adversity that you're going to see throughout the season.

That's the difference between the teams that are there in the end and the teams that aren't, the teams that are fragmented and the teams that you are proud of.

I think we got a good team this year. Last year we came in fourth in the league. We were picked in the bottom three of

the league, I believe. But we could've finished some more games. We were leading under two minutes at Alabama. We were leading in double overtime at Tennessee. We were leading with 20 seconds versus Missouri. We could have finished right towards the very top of the league.

A big thing this year has been finishing and closing games.

Got a great group. Looking forward to it. I'll take any questions.

Q. You were behind putting together a roster. Now that you've had a fair chance, how much better do you see this team being in terms of being able to play the style you want to play as opposed to last year?

BUCKY McMILLAN: I thought last year's group was able to play how we want to play in terms of they were heavy three-point shooting, full-court defense. We didn't have a lot of slashing. The players that played the majority of the minutes were the smallest Power Four team in the country.

It's strange, we played a scrimmage the other day, and when the ball came off the glass, we didn't have to have the ball fall perfect to us to rebound. We had more attackers, guys that can get to the free-throw line, guys that can get to the charge circle, guys that are going to get fouled. The later the season goes, when you're at high-level basketball, it becomes a real player's game. You got to have players that can create advantages without actions.

I think this year we've got a lot more of those, a lot of more positional size. It'll look very similar but I think we're going to attack the basket a lot better this year.

Q. Obviously hired really late in the cycle last year. How much more settled in do you feel? How do you feel like that's kind of helped you going into this year?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Yeah, it's good. Know what to expect. Just going through the league helps you. Just kind of know what it is a little bit, things you can adjust to help your group more. I know that helps.

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Nate Oats is a friend of mine. After his first years, he changed a couple things. We're going to be us, but I think that helps more than anything, just seeing what has success in this league.

I know this year, this league is about to be the best I think it's ever been. You got guys, players that get ruled eligible, get ruled eligible. It's gonna be the NBA and SEC right there.

It's going to be a league where every night is going to be a battle. Thanks to big Garth right there, we don't have the easiest schedule, do we? I think we're ranked up there with a pretty tough one. It's guys to be a battle that we're going to have to be ready for.

Q. In your first season with Texas A&M, you led them to finish fourth in the SEC. What was one of your favorite memories from your team during that run?

BUCKY McMILLAN: You know, the Auburn game was fun. It was a funny game because it had a crazy ending to it. We had a comeback. We had to hang on.

My parents both went to the University of Alabama. They love that down there in Auburn, so... That was a fun game right there. Winning the NCAA tournament was great. Saint Mary's was a top 25 game the majority of the year. Won their league. Had great teams like Gonzaga in it. Getting that one under us was good, too.

Q. How much did you miss Mackenzie last year? How much has he brought to the group this year so far?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Yeah, I think that's the thing that people sometimes forget is Mackenzie was a borderline first-rounder last year. Gets hurt, doesn't get to play. Actually played five, six games. X-rayed it, he's playing on a broken foot.

This guy is really going to be a great player in this league, stay healthy. He is stronger, shooting at a high clip. 6'10", leading us in rebounds. We stat all our stuff. Three-point percentage, fouls. He is a really special player.

But he's just a special dude. He's about winning. He wants to be coached. He came to Texas A&M without knowing us. It was just about how he saw himself and how he could improve, our plan for him. He deserves to have a great year. I think he's going to have a great year.

Q. Continuity of staff is important, especially in the SEC. What was it like for you to be able to retain a vast majority of your staff? How much do you lean on

them, not only in the off-season but game by game?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Yeah, great question.

The number one thing I think you'll see with all teams that are very good, they have great personnel. That's obviously players and staffing.

Our staff is awesome. We have awesome staff chemistry. Most of our staff has been head coaches. I've known most of our staff a very, very long time. We have just veterans that have been in this league. T.J. Cleveland was a point guard in the league, has coached in this league, has coached our style and played our style, which is very unique.

Frank Haith has been a veteran in this league forever. He was the National Coach of the Year. Think about that. Every day I go to work with a guy that was the best coach that year when he was at Missouri.

I've known Kyle Keller was one of the best coaches, mid-major coaches, there was when he was at Stephen F.

I've known Mitch Cole forever.

Dave Good has been with me since high school.

Those five guys right there, I could get into support staff, guys you know, Warren Fitzpatrick, all the way down the line. We have a great crew that's aligned and has a lot of experience in this league. That helped me tremendous.

Q. How do you replace that inside production that you got so much from Rashaun last year or do you even have to?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Someone asked me last year who was the most impactful player. I said Rashaun Agee was because of his consistency, right? As a coach you want to see consistency. Your really good players, you don't want a guy that gets you 30 one night, 2 the next. I'd rather see someone get you 12 and 8 every night like Rashaun would do.

Maybe it won't be the same production. What we have to have in that position is someone we know what we're going to get from them, right? It may not be the Rashaun 15 and 10, but it may be a 10 and 7 we know we're going to get every night from that player.

I think that we have players that are capable of doing that. I really do.

Rashaun's leadership is something that we're going to



have to replace, as well. We got some leaders emerging, but he was a great leader for us.

Q. How has your usage of analytics changed jumping up to Texas A&M, more staff, tracking data, resources, but also having all that data, have you fine-tuned your process how much you use, when you use it?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Good question.

I think we're one of the first when I was high school back even in 2008 using analytics. Now more people know kind of about the value of analytics.

There's certain things that people forget. That's like, here are the analytics, here are the shots you want to take, not want to take, here's the things you want to do on defense, not do on defense. Then it's being able to apply them. You got to know how to apply them.

We want these shots. How do we get these shots? If we don't want them to get these shots on defense, how do we do that?

Analytics is ever-evolving because it changes because coaches adapt. Something that was analytically correct two years ago, may not be analytically correct now. The one thing I know, all things in life that I know doesn't lie, that's math. Math don't lie.

It really helps coach your players when you can lay it out in front of them because they know that's not an opinion, this is just the facts right here. I think that helps more than anything.

Q. You grew up as a young man and as a basketball person in SEC country. You were very familiar with the conference. Was there anything that surprised you in your first trip through the league as a head coach?

BUCKY McMILLAN: Uhm... I guess the thing that I would say surprisingly that it didn't feel any different than coaching a JV basketball game. It just felt the same. When I coached a JV basketball game, that was the world right there. When you're coaching in the NCAA tournament, you're down there, it feels the same I guess.

That was a little surprising to me.

But I guess if it felt really different, I guess I wouldn't be here in the first place, right? It's an awesome league. I will say this. The thing what you can feel outside of the game, you can feel outside the game, like, when the passion of the fans, not during the game, you just don't feel any of that, but you feel it when you go into Baton Rouge, you can

feel it.

When you come into College Station, you just feel the Aggies. That's the great part about the SEC, every town has a unique culture to it. It revolves around the team for the most part. That's why the SEC, in my opinion, is where everybody should be wanting to play.

Appreciate y'all.

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