

Head Coach Wes Miller

When asked about the new faces on the team

"That's pretty normal. So, trying to evolve and understand that as a head coach is really important. I've worked really hard at that, our staffs work really hard at that. I will say with the seven new faces, it is oh man, there's a lot of new faces and a lot of those guys are really important our success this year. The one thing we do have is we have a really solid nucleus of returners that make it feel like it's not just a brand new team. I mean, Ody [Oguama] and Vik [Viktor Lakhin] and in particular, John Newman. I can keep kind of going down the list here, those six guys, but those guys bring that continuity and that older leadership to a group so it doesn't feel like you're just trying to work with a new team completely. They get into practice and they know the drills and they know the points of emphasis so we're actually a lot farther along this year in terms of where we are in practice and where we are as a team, given the transfers and the freshmen. I think that's more because of the guys that are returning. So we do have some good continuity, even though we have some new faces as well."

When asked how previous experience helps the development of the team

"I think we pride ourselves as a Program on Development. One thing we talk about a lot is we don't just say that we develop our players, we define what development means to us in every facet of basketball, of strength and conditioning of mental conditioning. Growing up as a young person, we define what development means, and we have a plan of how we execute that every day. And so, we're really proud of that the guys that have been in this program, and the longer they're here, the more they develop, we're proud of that growth. When you have some guys that have been a part of that process on the team, it helps buy in from those new players because they see, number one, they see the example of how to do it. The guys that are returning are a great example of how to do it. Then number two, it helps them buy in because those guys have bought in and believe in what we're doing. So anytime you have older players and continuity in a positive environment, I think we really do have a positive environment. I think the impacts of everybody's growth across the board is relevant, and certainly we're seeing that but we're not satisfied. We want even more of it."

When asked about the variety of abilities

"You look at those newcomers this year, it's a wide variety of guys that have different ability. They kind of play different positions or maybe have different strengths and weaknesses and also, different levels of maturity and experience. You got somebody like CJ Fredrick, who he might have as much experience in college basketball as anybody I've coached. Over the course of his career he played on NCAA Turfway on a team that was top five in the country the whole year at Iowa. Had a chance to win the national championship and was a starter, key contributor to that team. So it's two years, three, I believe, you know, if it's two I'm sorry, and then two years in Kentucky and been through a lot, which I think gives great perspective to leadership because he's been one of the key players in both programs that he's played out. He's also sat out and redshirted and fought through injuries. He really does have a plethora of experience that gives him the ability to be mature and lead. The neat thing about him is he has a really unique way of connecting to everybody around him. He's one of those guys that comes in and

does a good job connecting with the whole team. He brings something different than just one Rayvon [Griffith] dude, because they're coming from such different perspectives, but he's done a nice job of working with our whole team. And certainly, we have really high expectations for CJ [Fredrick] and I'll tell everybody this because I'm sure this is what people are, that know him or follow him are going to ask, he's had a really healthy summer and a healthy preseason. I think it's his first summer in a couple years or offseason that he's been able to even participate. I didn't realize this until I started getting to know him here this spring, but he didn't play basketball a lot. He wasn't cleared for live basketball until the first day of practice last year at Kentucky. That's really hard. That's really hard. You haven't had any summer, any build up training, and then you get thrown into it. So he's had that here all summer all fall. He's healthy, knock on wood, and I think that puts him in a position to really perform well for us."

When asked about the buildup of a conference slate

"Obviously, there's strategically, you're transitioning to a new conference, and it's been the best basketball conference in America, for the last recent history, right? I think it's almost inarguable, I would say. People in recruiting try to act like their leagues are better and you kind of laugh because it's one thing you can't argue, doesn't matter what metric you value. Over the last five or six years, it doesn't matter whether it's national championships, whether it's KenPom whether it's the net, any advanced analytical system. This league has been the best league in college basketball for five or six years. You're entering that league, and you don't have experience in that league. You know, we wanted to make sure that we weren't home a lot because we're going to be on the road a ton, traveling all over the country. Now we go to Utah, and we should go to Arizona here in a couple of years. We wanted to make sure we were home that we got a chance to build our team here in Cincinnati. We didn't want to over travel early. Certainly that doesn't mean that we padded our schedule because I look at our schedule and there's some real challenges and they might not be all names that that our fans will go, 'wow, that's a crazy challenge.' But, I think if people really look at some of the opponents that are coming in here, some of them are picked to win their league or some played in the NCAA tournament last year. A lot of them picked in the top three in their league, so we challenged ourselves more than people may think but trying to be home, trying to be around the area was really important. I look at the Dayton game, that'll be a really intense environment. I think there's traditional rivalry there from the location and history. That'll be something that will really challenge us, prepare us for league play. Obviously, the Crosstown shootout is going to be that every year. Damon Stottlemyre and I were able to get together and agree on a home at home so we'll play Georgia Tech here. So those are some of the marquee games for sure, but I think people can't look just at those. I think there's some other really challenging games on the schedule. It was a nice balance of challenging ourselves a little bit trying to be home and trying to get ready for this transition into the big 12."

When asked if he thinks he has a roster than can do a lot of different things

"I do. Yeah, I think we build it that way for certain. We have some versatility, some lineup versatility. People know how aggressive I want to play defense. Look at 12 years as head coach and over the

overwhelming majority, we've been aggressive defense and a successful defense. We want to do that here at the highest level. You have to have rim presence to do that to really extend pressure. You got to have guys at the rim that make you pay for just getting down there and I think you have to have positional size to do that. So defensively, I think we've crafted a roster that that has some of those components. We've made sure our style of play allows for lineup versatility. The stuff that we've really spent time on in the summer and the fall is whether we have two big guys out there, the traditional big guys, or whether we have one big with some swing forwards, which we have quite a few of those as well. The habits of how we play offensively and defensively are very consistent so that we can sub or change a lineup which may really impact our opponent but doesn't have us thinking a whole lot. It's pretty seamless. I'm proud of the roster that's been crafted, but also proud of some of the kind of structure our staffs come up with to make it all work, going into a new league."

When asked about Dan Skillings development

"Listen, and we sat in here all year last year. I think I was really clear. The confidence I have in Dan [Skillings] and his ability, his talent. He was just so young. Not young just because he was a freshman, but young in basketball, right? Most of us started basketball when we could walk, most college players are like that. Dan got to organized basketball much later than most people. Certainly, played for great coaches back in Philadelphia, throughout high school and throughout summer stuff. There's things because of his long nature to basketball that just weren't there as a freshman and we spent a lot of time trying to get him up to speed. The first thing that I see with Dan [Skillings], not just now but over the course of the summer and the fall is, there's just things he understands now that he didn't understand as a freshman. That learning curve just isn't quite as big and that's allowing him to go play with his natural instincts and gifts that we've all seen flashes of. I think we'll see that more consistently because he didn't have to think quite as much and he's worked really hard. He's worked hard on his body. He's worked really hard on his skill set in his game. You can see that kind of improvement. I say this to our team all the time, the best thing about freshmen is they become sophomores. I tell freshmen, you don't have to wait till your sophomore year to become a sophomore. I keep telling Jizzel [James] every day and Rayvon [Griffith], you guys can be sophomores today if you'd like. We don't have to wait till this time next year. Dan's [Skillings] kind of going through that process this offseason and going from a freshman to what I'd call a sophomore, maybe the seasons college player and you'd expect us to see good results over the course of the year there."

When asked about [Jamil] Reynolds progression

"I'll tell you what, guys, I've been really really impressed with what he's done since the day that he got here. Number one, I think he feels that he's in a healthy environment and that we really value our guys health and their mental wellbeing. I think he's in a really healthy environment. He feels comfortable. You just look at it. He came in and I was very clear with him from day one. I'm going to do my part for you, but you got to do your part. Part of it is coming in here with the right mindset to work every day. He comes in and I don't want to share too much information, but I want to say he's lost like 45 pounds in three months. And we played against him last year at Temple. And if you really watched him at Temple, there's flashes over the course of every game he played. He makes two or three plays every night that

just make you go wow, jaw dropping for somebody with his size, right. And the biggest challenge is getting that to be more consistent. I kind of felt like getting him in a different kind of condition would allow for that. I think our hunch was right, because the better shape he gets and he's really, really invested in doing the right things and the right approach every day. I mean, he's lost a ton of weight. He looks great. He's running the floor as good as anybody on our team. He's maybe one of the best passers I've coached, maybe the best passer ever that I've coached in the frontcourt. He's shown the ability to shoot three point shots, which is wild, he can actually really shoot the basketball. His scoring on the box is well documented and he certainly presents defensively. I'm trying to get him to get out there and guard guards and move his feet, I think he thought I was crazy. The first couple of weeks he was here in the summer asked him to do that. There's some possessions and practice where I stop and go, 'Wow.' If he can do that consistently, which I believe he's capable of, then I think he's gonna turn not just the heads for our fans and the people that watch our team, but I think he'll turn heads all across basketball. So I've been pleased with him. He's still got a lot of growing to do, but he's taken some massive steps forward in a really short period of time here."