

2018-19 Penn State Women's Basketball Media Day Coquese Washington Press Conference

Coquese Washington | Head Coach

Opening Statement: Welcome everyone to the new season of 2018-19 Lady Lion basketball. It's great to see everybody out. We're looking forward to a really exciting season. We started practicing on October 1, so we've been practicing for about 15 days now. I'm really enthused with what I've seen at practice so far. We have a good group, a good mix of experience and youth. Looking at our team, we have some experience on the perimeter. When you talk about Teniya Page, Siyeh Frazier, Amari Carter, they really give us a good strong core in the backcourt and that's holstered with some youth in the post. I like what I'm seeing from our post play so far with our young kids and Alisia Smith, Sam Breen, Lauren Ebo, and Bexley Wallace. We have a good blend with youth and the energy and the competitiveness. The camaraderie that I've seen in the gym so far has been at a very high level and I think that's really been built off what we've been able to do this summer with our trip to Spain and the time we were able to put together in the gym over the summer. So, that was a really good jump of course. We have about three more weeks before we get going for real so we want to keep getting better over the next three weeks and be ready when the season starts in November.

Q: Teniya [Page] got named Preseason All-Big Ten by both coaches and the media. What's the next step for her and her development? She's had so many career accomplishments thus far but what's next for Teniya?

CW: I think what's next for her is continuing to elevate her leadership on the court. She's somebody who's tremendous in terms of putting up the numbers, but galvanizing the team and utilizing the various weapons that she has this year and that's something we've seen from her so far in practice. We saw that over the summer in Spain and I think that's the next step for her and she's embraced that chapter.

Q: You bring back a good amount of your scoring from last season and with that a lot of other Big Ten schools are bringing back their good competition. How do you take the next step in not only developing them, but perfecting their game and working on the little things that maybe last year led to some of the close losses and close battles you guys had?

CW: I think experience is an invaluable gift to have in any sport, but certainly in basketball experience is an incredible gift to have. That's one thing that a lot of our returning players were able to get last year. They were able to get some game experience and understand how tough it can be night-in and night-out in the Big Ten. Our conference is very tough and as you noted, across the conference everybody's bringing back some pretty good players. I look at Iowa who's bringing back the leading scorer in the country and who was fifth in rebounds - one of the best players in the country is playing right here in the Big Ten. When you look at who Maryland is bringing back, who Michigan State is bringing back, when you look at who Nebraska is bringing back, when you look at who Michigan is bringing back, when you look at who's coming back for Rutgers, just going down the line, it's going to be a very competitive Big Ten season just as it was last year. We have to keep working at getting better every day and consistency with that experience is one thing that's going to be important for us.

Q: With all that experience, Teniya [Page] and Amari [Carter] combined for almost 50% of your points and assists last year. Do you see that production going up for them or staying about the same? How do you help support those two on the offensive end?

CW: I want their production to stay the same and get a little bit more production across the board. Again, that's what I'm excited about with our post players is that they have an opportunity to be impactful for us on both ends of the floor, both offensively and defensively. When I look Siyeh Fraizer, Sam Breen and Kamaria McDaniel, I look at them being able to be contributors and do it consistently. All of them had nights where they were pretty good, but being able to do it consistently is the next step for those returning players.

Q: What did you hear from Jaylen Williams and De'Janae Boykin on their attempt to transfer and who do you think will best replace them on the line up?

CW: As you see throughout the country when you look at the number of transfers, a common theme is fit. Just trying to find the right fit at different stages in your career. What may be a good fit coming out of high school as a 17 or 18-year-old kid, might not still be the best fit when you're going into your senior year at 21 or 22 years old. You may be a bit of a different person. Those are kind of the things having to do more with overall life situations and not just purely about basketball. Everybody's not going to move on and go pro so when they start looking at the total package, again, what was a good fit at 17 or 18 might not still be the best fit at 21 or 22. We wish them all the best of luck and best wishes in their new situation. We're really excited about who we have here and who's on our roster this year and who will contribute for us. All of them will have an opportunity to step up and be impactful for us.

Q: Coach, you just talked about the production in the post and with the two freshman post players, exactly how impactful do you think they're going to be?

CW: I hope they'll be very impactful, but they're freshmen so you never know. They're talented and they're workers and they're sponges. It's going to be a matter of them adjusting to physical play on this level and the speed of the game on this level, but the early returns are very promising that they'll have a presence for us. It's going to be about the consistency and being able to do it night-in and night-out.

Q: What's the latest on Jada [Travascio-Green]? Do you expect her back at all at any point?

CW: Her rehab is going really well. She's hitting all the markers she's supposed to hit. There's no timetable on her return. Whenever she's ready to play we're going to play her, but there's no timetable. She's doing really well in rehab and we'll see how it goes.

Q: With the trip to the WNIT last year and the trip to Spain this off season, do you feel as though that's improved the overall team chemistry going into this year?

CW: The one thing about the trip to Spain is when you take these foreign tours in the summer, it gives you more time on the court. When you have Teniya [Page] returning and getting back into form from an injury and you have three freshmen coming in, having that extra time to build the bond on the court is very valuable. Our team really embraced having that time. We had a fantastic summer. They worked hard on the court, they worked hard in the weight room, they worked hard to get in shape. When we went to Spain that was an opportunity to get to know each other in a different setting. Get to know each other outside of being a student-athlete. When you are with each other for nine to 10 days straight and you're eating dinner, and sharing a bedroom and going to a cathedral and going to museums and spending all that time, you get to know each other on a deeper level. We're tapping into that chemistry that was built and is really been evident so far this season.

Q: With you guys losing a good amount of the front court, just having a lot of experienced returning guards, last year we talked a lot about controlling the rebounding game and controlling the boards. Is there a plan in place for those guards to really help out the forwards?

CW: Definitely. Rebounding is certainly a team effort and especially on the defensive end we need to have a team effort. There certainly is an understanding and focus on that we have to go after the boards with a team mentality and being the first to come down with those tough physical rebounds in the ground.

Q: You always want to run, you always want to go up tempo. Is it a little bit of a conundrum to try and get those rebounds and want to go out? You can't run unless you get the rebound.

CW: Sometimes guards get greedy. They're ready to get down on the offensive end of the floor. We have to make sure we pay attention to getting the ball first. It's certainly possible for us to do both and we just have to be mindful about taking care of the stop and getting the ball first before we take off.

Q: Do you want to be up-tempo like you've been in the past?

CW: Absolutely, we definitely want to run. When I look at our guard play, certainly a strength is our speed so we want to utilize that as much as possible.

Q: Going back to what we talked about before, obviously a lot of the seniors are guards and a lot of the freshman are post players. Have the seniors been able to take some of the freshman under their wings and show them the program, show them the culture, and help them with that?

CW: Definitely. I think the great thing about this freshman class is how willing they are to be taught, and how willing they are to be led, and how open they are to absorbing things. They really are sponges. They want to do what needs to be done to help the program be successful on the court, and off the court. They're listening to the upper classman, they're listening to the coaches, they're taking advice, and working their tails off. I think that attitude, that effort, and that work ethic will pay dividends. Now will that pay dividends on game one? I'm not sure about that, but just having that approach is certainly a positive and I think it's going to, at some point, pay dividends for our freshman class.

Q: Coach, I bet the number one thing for opposing coaches is going to be stop Teniya Paige. How much of a challenge is it to for you guys to replicate what she is going to see in game play in practice so that she is ready for double or triple teams because I guess that could come this season?

CW: Well I think the biggest way we can help Teniya is give her more options and more weapons. It's pretty hard to double and triple team when there's other people who are going to make you pay. One of the best ways for her teammates to help her out is to understand how they can be a factor, how they can be a threat, and how they can impact the game. Make it much more challenging for people to key on her, double team, or triple team her. In practice we work on that, we work on being available, we work on making sure we're in spots where everybody else can be impactful, so it's a matter of replicating that well on game day.

Q: How much dialogue do you have with Teniya in terms of becoming the star player and keeping her grounded, or has she adapted well to that role?

CW: She's not somebody who sees herself as a star. She's somebody who is constantly working to improve. She sees her flaws more than she sees the things that everybody else sees. She sees the weaknesses and the areas that she needs to improve in. She's somebody who's always looking to get better, she's always in the gym before and after practice. She's not somebody that has that star mentality, or any kind of diva attitude at all. If anything, she's somebody I have to point out "you're playing pretty well, can you relax a little bit, you're doing quite well" because she's going to hone in on the one or two areas that aren't as good as she wants them to be.

Q: Coach, last couple of years you guys have been pretty lights out at home, but there's been some issues winning on the road. Do you think that bringing back all that talent is going to help you guys see some better results on the road?

CW: I think experience helps that. I think also just developing a rhythm being on the road. It's tough playing on the road, but I think experience helps that and understanding what you have to do to be successful on the road and your approach. I also think being a little bit more versatile in terms of having more players that can impact the game, that helps when you're at home, as they say everyone plays better at home. If we can get a little bit more consistency in who plays well on the road that will definitely help us perform a little bit better when we travel.

Q: Coquese, could you talk a little bit about Geoff Lanier and what he brings to the program?

CW: Yes, Geoff Lanier is our new assistant coach. He's a defensive-minded guy and he really watches the defensive end of the floor. He brings a lot of intensity and energy in the gym. He's been coaching for so long, 20-plus years, that he just has so much experience. Our kids have really responded to his way of coaching and teaching, and have so much respect for his years of experience. I think he's been a tremendous addition to our staff. I'm really excited about having him in the gym, and how he's impacted our team.

Q: You mentioned defense. Is that a higher priority? There were some times where the defense wasn't so stellar last year.

CW: Defense is always a priority. We've looked at a few different schematic changes. We'll see how those things go. Having somebody again, with that much experience, who is a lot more in tune to the defensive end of the floor, it's going to be good for us (speaking about Geoff Lanier).

Q: Are there any rule changes this year?

CW: No rule changes this year, if they come it will be next year. The game will be the same, and we're excited about that.

I would like to say a big congratulations to Jerry Fisher who's starting his 40th season as the radio announcer for Lady Lion Basketball. This will be his final season, so 40 years of doing Lady Lion Basketball. Jerry, this is going to be a great year and we're going to miss you, but congratulations on an awesome, awesome accomplishment.