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**NCAA** 2013 BASKETBALL  
CHAMPIONSHIP  
DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL  
FIRST/SECOND ROUNDS  
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY, HOST

An Interview With:

## **PENN STATE**

**Q. For the players, what do you guys remember about last year's game against LSU and how maybe are they different than maybe the way your guys are different this year around?**

ALEX BENTLEY: I remember that it was a pretty physical game. LSU is a physical team and I think we are, too. Just making sure we take care of business on the offensive and defensive end and I think both teams have gotten better within the past year.

NIKKI GREENE: Like Alex said, very physical and last year very athletic, and so us contributing on the offensive and defensive end, it should be a really good game.

**Q. Playing Louisiana, a little deja vu, it's a little bit unusual for an NCAA team to see the same team two years in a row, does it feel like a conference rivalry or something like that?**

ALEX BENTLEY: The area is familiar but we are two different teams now from last year. LSU has changed, we have changed, so it's a whole different ballgame now.

**Q. Did either of you ever watch them on television this year?**

NIKKI GREENE: Yes.

**Q. And? Tell me what you saw, what you thought. Do you have any memories of it.**

ALEX BENTLEY: They get up-and-down the floor well. LSU is a good team. They have had a good season, and they deserve to be in the NCAA Tournament and we are excited to play them tomorrow.

NIKKI GREENE: I totally agree. I did not get to see them play this year but I did watch the

first half of the next game, and they are physical and two big post players, athletic guards.

**Q. Compared to last year, what do you feel like makes you all a better team? How come you all are better this year as compared to last year at this time?**

ALEX BENTLEY: I just think with a year under our belt, that that experience, you know, we have been here, we have been to the Sweet 16, we played in the NCAA Tournament, and you know, we have just learned a lot over the course of this year compared to last year.

So we are just better in that aspect. And obviously individual workouts and people getting better at their skill sets have been important, too.

**Q. Alex, you guys have scored 80-plus in all games you've played thus far, is it just an anomaly? Do you guys like the shooting background? Is there any explanation for it?**

ALEX BENTLEY: I just think we have a well balanced team. We have a well balanced attack. We have post players, a lot of them that can score in the lane. We have guards that can -- all of us can score and that's the reason why we get a lot of points up there on the board.

**Q. Unlike last night where they had one big person and this team has two, and Cal Poly was amazed how many big people you guys have, but can you talk about the importance of your guards, having to take over or do differently, because you have more of an even match down low?**

NIKKI GREENE: Because LSU have two big players, I feel like our post players are able to still dominate and you know, defend their post players as well as our guards. Our guards are athletic and we are able to defend Alex and Maggie and Dara. So being able to defend the athleticism, I think we'll be able to handle their pressure.

**Q. If we ask this question last year, being only from four and a half hours away, was there much interest on your part or LSU's part when you were being recruited?**

NIKKI GREENE: Penn State and LSU were in my Top-4 my senior year of high school, but after building a relationship with Coquese, my decision was made to go to Penn State.

As far as LSU had high interest but I felt more comfortable coming to Penn State.

**Q. Touched on this already a little bit, where do you feel specifically you've improved from a year ago at this time? What areas do you think you're better in and how do you think that's going to impact tomorrow night?**

ALEX BENTLEY: I think we have improved across the boards. I think we play better balance inside-outside game. The guard looking for the posts and the posts are able to kick out to the guards.

That's something we have definitely improved on and our defense has definitely gotten better and it's been a focus all year and see it better on the defensive end. You know, we've been working hard at it every day in practice, and you know, I think we've caught on and we've started to understand how to play together on defense.

**Q. Alex, you and Nikki had big games down low. What does that do for you and Maggie specifically?**

ALEX BENTLEY: You know, it's huge, but I mean, going into games, we see what match-ups are going to be best and we knew that, you know, our post players were going to be important to contribute.

I mean, they played a phenomenal game last night, all of them, all of our posts came to play yesterday. So you know, we are proud with our performance and we can't be here without our post players.

**Q. Did you have a larger rooting section than normal for last night's game? This is pretty close to home, relatively speaking. How has that been for people that followed you to play here?**

NIKKI GREENE: Last night I had a pretty good section. My mother and my father came up, a couple of coaches -- it felt great. It's not like the big crowd at home but it felt good to have some

family members cheering Penn State on and myself.

**Q. When you were looking at them, it looked like you were looking on in amazement or fear of what they might stay.**

COACH WASHINGTON: Probably a little bit of both. (Laughter) more amazement than fear, more amazement.

**Q. I assume you would not want to have as slow a start offensively as you did last night.**

COACH WASHINGTON: Definitely we don't want to start off slow. But one of the things I think this team does is we have to get a feel for the game, so even if we do start off a little slowly, I don't worry too much about it because that's kind of who we are. It takes us a little bit to get a feel for the game, get a feel for the team. They understand the game plan intellectually, but understanding experientially every night, it's different.

It takes us sometimes a little bit to get going and see how the game is going to be played. But then once we get going, we are generally okay.

**Q. How is LSU different this year, do you think?**

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, I think one way they are different is Plaisance, she's a problem. You know, she's a matchup nightmare. Just what she can do with her size at 6-5, shooting it from the outside, putting it on the floor, creating her own shot, creating for her teammates and then being able to score down low; certainly last year, LaSandra Barrett was able to do the same thing, go inside-outside but LaSandra Barrett is 6-1 and Plaisance is 6-5. That's a big difference.

You know, certainly they don't have as much depth this year as they did last year, but they still rebound the ball very well. They are playing the match-up zone very, very well, making it tough for you to get shots and figure out what they are doing.

So you know, they have been a team that I think across the season, you know, with integrating so many new players, not necessarily new to the team, but new roles, having bigger responsibilities, it takes some time for to you kind of gel and they started to figure it out the last seven, eight games

of the season, who they are, who their identity is, how they need to play and what they can do well and be successful at.

And I think they are now playing their best basketball of the season, and playing with a high level of confidence and playing on their home floor in this environment. You know, that's tough. That's tough to play against.

So we have got to be ready and, you know, we've got to be ready to defend their physical play, keep them off the boards and try to have an up-tempo game, because that's what we like to apply.

**Q. Given the up-tempo game you like to play, and they only have seven or eight players depending -- to what extent do you think that could be a factor that you could exploit?**

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, you know, I'm hoping it will be a factor. But the thing is, they played with limited numbers all year. So they know how to play with seven people the whole game. I mean, that's not something new to them. It's not like they have been playing ten, 11 people and the last week or two they have had injuries. This is something they have dealt with all season long. I don't see this as something being a big chink in their armor, only having seven people at their disposal. That's what they have dealt with all season long and they have dealt with it very, very well.

I just, again, we want to dictate the tempo, and one of the ways they seem to start to have success with slowing it down a little bit late in the season, so again, I think it's going to be a contrast in styles. You know, we want it up-tempo. They would probably like it a little bit slower.

So you know, we'll see which style can kind of win out.

**Q. Do you know Nikki at all or do you have any coaching relationship besides her recruiting trail?**

COACH WASHINGTON: Yeah, we're friends. We've been friends. We played against each other in college. Although both of us are so old, we don't remember the game very much. But you know, we've become friends as well as colleagues and I have a tremendous high regard for what she's done, what she's accomplished as a head coach. Certainly, you know, being a part of the Tennessee coaching staff for so many years and having so much success, I mean, she's one of

the future superstar coaches in this league; in the country, actually. So what she's done with this team this year, given their injuries and limited numbers is phenomenal. And when we're not playing against each other, I'm certainly rooting for her success.

**Q. Have you ever been, as a coach or a player, in a situation where they are in where you have such limited numbers and you're trying to fight through that?**

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, as a player, you like having limited numbers because that means you don't come out of the game. I'm sure their players are excited about that. They know coming in every game, they know they are going to get plenty of run and lots of sweat.

You know, with TV time-outs and time-outs you can take, you know, I think having seven, eight people is plenty. I just don't think it's -- I don't think it's something that hinders you from being successful. So you know, when I was at Notre Dame, and we made it that we won the National Championship, I think we only played eight players, so I'm not feeling sorry for Nikki Caldwell. (Laughter) She'll be fine.

**Q. Is it at all intimidating to coach against somebody who wears shoes like Nikki does?**

COACH WASHINGTON: Did you see how high my heels are? (Laughter) They are not as fancy, not as much animal print, but, you know, the heel is pretty high. I'm only 5-6 but on game day, I'm like 5-10.

**Q. What I asked Alex, how are y'all better as a team this year compared to last year?**

COACH WASHINGTON: Alex kind of hit it on the head. I think in two particular areas. I think we are more experienced, you know, having returned the bulk of our team from last year, and playing in these type of games. So I think our experience in understanding how long these games are, is one of the things that makes us better.

But I also think probably the biggest area we've gotten better is defensively. I think we play better team defense. Statistically, I think across the board, our defensive numbers are better, and that's helped us when we have nights where we

have not shot the ball well. We're able to stay engaged and we are able to make squeak some out and if we have not been successful, we are at least able to keep it close. So I think our defense, and offensively I think our balance offensively is a little bit better. I think we play better inside-outside or outside in, depending on the game and the team and how they are defending us. So I think we have just a better offensive balance and so those three things.

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