

Pac-12 Women's Basketball Media Day

Monday, October 7, 2019



Charli Turner Thorne Robbi Ryan Taya Hanson Arizona State Sun Devils

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: You ready for it? Okay, we've got a tradition for you newbies in the room.

Okay, so dog days of summer, really hot, two nuns are in their church painting the inside, and then the air-conditioning breaks. So we'll just say this was in Arizona, so it's hot. So they keep going because they have to get it done this day. So they keep painting, and then the one nun is about to pass out. And she looks at her friend, she says, hey, how about if we just take these heavy garments off and finish up. The other nun says, well, I don't have anything on under, and the nun says, I don't, either, but hey, stained glass windows. Okay, sounds good. So they take them off and much better. They keep painting and they're getting it done, and all of a sudden there's a knock on the door. So the one nun goes over and says, who is it. There's a voice that says, it's the blind guy from down the street. So they look at each other, okay, open the door. Beat red, turns his head, two boxes of window blinds in his arms. I'm so sorry, where would you like these.

Okay, so we're going to play like naked nuns this year. We're going to find a way. We're going to get it done. We're going to go for it.

Super excited, with Robbi Ryan, with Reili Richardson, really going to lead this team. We have a great senior class, nothing they haven't seen. They've beat and played against the top competition in the country their entire career. Taya is a great representative of our underclass -- our freshmen, sophomores -- athletic, versatile, really going to help us get back to a faster pace, more aggressive style. Real excited to finish top 15 -- as a team 15th in the nation last year, but we kind of had to adjust things, and we're excited to get back to a little more aggressive style this year. So thank you.

Q. For the players, what's your excitement specifically about this season? What are you looking forward to in terms of what you guys bring to the floor, team chemistry, that kind of thing?

TAYA HANSON: I mean, we've got a fun group of girls

this year. We're very unified already and just working together and trying to help each other as much as we can. And then in practices, we've just been getting after it and trying to push each other to go as hard as we can. Because in the end, that's what we'll fall back on is our practice. So Charli has definitely been helping us get back to our Sun Devil defense so that we can really be aggressive and be the tougher team this year.

Q. I think most people have been asked what they did in the off-season. It looks like you guys have been (indiscernible). Are you guys weight lifting partners or anything? Who's stronger?

ROBBI RYAN: No, I lift more weight than her, so we can't lift together.

No, but we've worked really hard this past off-season, in the weight room, cardio, skill-wise, and I think it's going to show up this season, so I'm excited.

Q. Charli, with the noticeable absences due to graduation, some big shoes to fill. Who can be trusted from the veterans coming back to take on an increased role? Maybe trust isn't the right word, but given that opportunity, if you will. And then some of the freshmen who might be able to step in, catching on quickly, looking like they might be impact kids right away?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Yeah, absolutely. Well, certainly these two here, particularly -- well, on both sides of the ball. But Reili has had a great off-season. She's always shot the ball well, but when she gets into the games and has to do so many other things. But she's fitter, stronger, and so really excited with how she's looking.

Kiki -- Kiara Russell -- our other senior has continued to be a little bit plagued, but we get her healthy. And then Jamie Ruden the same thing, instant offense, right, the microwave. Everybody is like, how is Jamie Ruden doing? The other coaches in the conference because they know how good she is, and she's doing really well.

And then just that sophomore class we have, Iris. Jayde Van Hyfte is really looking good. She had to -- Taya backed up Courtney and Jayde backed up Kiana, and those were pretty awesome seniors that they learned from and played behind. So she's really doing

well.

And then we have three -- Ja'Tavia, the grad transfer, that was a Godsend for us with everything that we lost in the post. I mean, she's a great fit for us. She's a great teammate, and she's really going to help us.

And then our three freshmen, they're dynamic. They're athletic. Little Sara -- we call her little Sara -- very high motor, scoring point guard. And Eboni Walker, top recruit out of Centennial High School in Vegas. She just fits the Sun Devil relentless, going to make things happen. And Syd Caldwell, too. She was slowed a little bit by a knee, but she's get being back into things. Yeah, we're excited.

And I will say, Eva Rubin is definitely our big 6'5" center who has played behind some really good post players. She's now a junior, and it's her time to really step up and help us, so she's worked hard.

Q. I was wondering, just from last year maybe from last year to this year, an area where you're hoping to maybe expose some Pac-12 opponents that you couldn't last year but knowing what you have in terms of personnel this year that maybe you might try to install?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Two things. Number one, as we've already alluded to, I think that we're going to be able to take more away. We play in the best conference in the country hands down, not even close. We're playing against, therefore, some of the best offensive players in the country. And so I think we're going to be in a position maybe to guard them a little harder, shut down some people a little bit more consistently.

And then on the flipside, I've been joking today that we were the best shooting team in the country in warmups last year. Like we would literally go and barely missed a shot. I really think we have the potential to take our great shooters and get our shooting percentage up into 47, 48, 49 percent like the elite teams in the country. That's our goal. I think we have the ability to do that. We're working towards that.

Q. How did the signing of Ja'Tavia Tapley come to be?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Well, we were going to look to probably sign a post player late, and just because we did lose our three post players from last year in Charnea and Kiana and Sophia Elenga. So we were kind of looking into junior colleges, and clearly the transfer situation is an option sometimes. And the grad transfer was really -- we didn't really need anybody to sit a year. It really kind of just happened. And I will tell you and the people in this room that know me and

know our program know that we don't just take a kid because they're going to help us on the basketball court. So we really vet them in terms of who they are as a person, and once we got to know her -- because we didn't at all -- and did our reference checks and did our vetting, she's just a great teammate and a great person that's been a great addition.

Obviously we're very excited because that's what we needed. We needed a veteran post to go with the rest of our roster.

Q. She has a different style obviously coming from USC to yours, different culture, different style, et cetera.

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Well, you know, she's learning because she didn't get to train in the summer, so she's been in here in the fall. But I think -- I mean, every culture and every program is different. So I think that's been something that she's really embraced, and then the basketball is basketball. She was one of the top players in the country coming out of high school, so I think she's enjoying just our high standards. We have very high standards, and we're about bringing that every day, and I think she knows she's got one year, and she's really embracing that.

Q. Taya, all about shooting the three, I know it. Folks have told me about it. What did you work on to be just a better spot-up shooter from range this summer?

TAYA HANSON: My mental game for sure. That was -- one of my biggest focuses in the off-season was just to really be able to come down, have my feet set, lock into that rim, and be able to hit the shot like I know I can. I think that was -- my huge focus this off-season was just all around locking into how I can improve mentally as a player.

Q. Robbi, what are you doing to help Ja'Tavia learn the ASU way?

ROBBI RYAN: Tay, I love her. She's one of my besties. We've gotten along really well thus far since she's been at ASU, and our culture, like it's in her already. She needs a little bit of time adjusting, and it's been great just getting to know her off the court, too. And I think just hanging out with her has helped her learn our style of play and just who we are, because I think that really correlates on to the basketball court. Yeah, she's been great. She just absorbs everything, and she embraces it.