

Pac-12 Women's Basketball Media Day

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Kamie Ethridge
Chanelle Molina

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Washington State Cougars



KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Well, thank you for being here. I'm thrilled to be here again, year two. It's again an exciting time to be a part of the Pac-12. And to get to be a part of a media day that is done just at this kind of level and this kind of professionalism and a lot of fun, and just it's such a neat experience to be able to be here and be sharing it with these guys. So thank you for that.

Again, year two, I think the big thing that I would tell you is the biggest issue would be I'm glad year one is over. It was -- I think the thing that I learned the most about -- I knew the league pretty well. I think you can do that really well. The thing that was the most difficult for us was just learning your own team in the midst of a season. We went through some things that I didn't expect from the team a year ago, and that's what happens.

What you don't know, you don't know. And now a year later, I just feel like I know this group better. We're built a little bit better. We have a little bit more depth in our program now, and having been the way we want to play and our system for a year, I think these two are now in a position to really flourish and be great leaders for us. So excited to be here, excited to be representing Washington State and excited to be the coach for these two players.

Q. Bobi, do you have your doctorate yet?

BORISLAVA HRISTOVA: (Shaking head.)

Q. Can you talk about your decision to come back and play another year?

BORISLAVA HRISTOVA: Definitely. It wasn't the hardest decision, but looking at the years back, this team, this school has never been to the NCAA Tournament for a long time, and this is something I wanted to be part of. I wanted to do something special with this team and this coaching staff. And I was thinking -- and I think they as a coaching staff can make me better. And being with this team together, I think we can build something into something special this year, so I wanted to be part of it and leave

something behind me when I leave, because I've got one last chance in this.

Q. Bobi, first of all, I love the fact that you have your knee pads on. That's amazing. You're ready to ball right now, aren't you?

BORISLAVA HRISTOVA: I'm ready.

Q. You've got a 3-on-3 game outside somewhere?

BORISLAVA HRISTOVA: Yeah.

Q. I see you up here and speaking so well, and you seem so comfortable and confident. And I think back to when you were a freshman and how shy you were. From your own perspective, how have you grown as a player, as a person, just as a confident human?

BORISLAVA HRISTOVA: I think I've grown so much. I still at times feel really uncomfortable. It's not my strength talking in public. But it's just something I have to do, and I think I've grown a lot throughout the years. It's my fifth year, which is -- yeah, surprising, but yeah, I feel more confident. It's just -- yeah.

Q. Chanelle, coming off such a great season, kind of dovetailing on some of the questions that Cindy asked other players before you, what you worked on this summer. As good as you are, there's parts of you that seems like it's just scratching the surface. What are some of the things that aren't so obvious to us that you have been working on that you know is going to make you that kind of guard?

CHANELLE MOLINA: Leadership. My leadership ability and my ability to impact those around me. I had a meeting with Coach last week talking about being that leader, being that person that people will run through a wall for. Just like how I'd run through a wall for Coach. So I want them to respect me.

And just bringing positive energy to practice. I feel like that's so important because it makes -- especially the freshmen coming in. It makes them comfortable. Like they don't have to think about getting yelled at in practice. We were talking about bad cop, good cop. Coach is a bad cop and us leaders are the good cops, so we'll be encouraging them, like I see you right back, saying things like that to help boost their confidence?

Q. What did you need to work on?

CHANELLE MOLINA: Well, as a senior, I feel like I need to be that for my team. And if I want to take this program to new heights, that's exactly what I need to do, be in that role.

Q. Coach, I saw some amazing highlights of you before you got inducted at UT, which was a great honor with your great career. From the players, did you see the highlights and what did you think about Coach back in the day and what a baller she was?

CHANELLE MOLINA: That highlight with her passing, I don't know how you did it, passing behind your back.

BORISLAVA HRISTOVA: That was impressive, yeah.

CHANELLE MOLINA: You see things on the court and to be coached by a player that played like that, that's amazing. I'm glad to be coached by her because I have so much more to learn, not just as a basketball player but as a person in general. She knows things about me that no one else does, and I'm excited for this team, and I'm excited to be coached by them, by Jason, the new coach who's coming in. I'm super excited, and I'm just going to -- we're going to play, we're going to give it all we got our senior year and see what happens from there, but we're going to keep competing.

Q. Coach, with some international flavor coming again for you guys this year, you kind of -- this program just hangs a hat on that, and you get kids from abroad that can help you right away. How will they complement the depth that you have, especially with Bobi coming back in a really strong backcourt?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: You're right. We obviously had to improve our inside game. We signed two 6'3", 6'4" players, two players that I think we can really -- they're young. They'll have some mistakes in Bella and Emma, an Australian, and a player that is from Post Falls, Idaho, but came from Rwanda, Africa. Again, at least we have the body size, the athleticism, the presence, and two players that will bang a little and rebound and give us a little bit more depth in the post.

Bobi gets to move back to more of a natural position as a wing player. Obviously I think our younger players had great summers and spring and this fall, and being able to surround -- to be great role players with two players like this.

So we're just in a better spot, I think, around these two. And I think these two and how they've committed to becoming better players, better leaders, better teammates, better competitors, those were things that we put on their plate a little bit this summer, and they're

going to do their part. And I think they're going to inspire and bring everybody else to another level, and I think they're going to leave this place a lot better -- they're going to leave Washington State in a lot better situation than they've ever been before.

Q. Kamie, I know you said you felt like you knew the league when you got here, but I'm curious what you didn't know about the league that you got from experiencing it, and what a coach needs to coach their team to do to be competitive in the Pac-12?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I say this jokingly, but I say I have loved every day of my job except game day. You know, every game day was a little rough this past year.

But you know, that's just it. The nature -- you're playing at the highest level, and it doesn't matter who you're playing in this league, there are fantastic coaches, established coaches that have their culture built. They've recruited for years and years. They have depth. They build their program and their team to be able to play and withstand any kind of system and any kind of -- they can play physical if they need to. They can stretch it out and be more finesse and run. You've got all different styles of play in this league.

I think going through it helps. It gives us a better indication of what we need to do and how we need to prepare and be better prepared as we go into it. But it was no surprise, and it is no surprise, to walk out and play against these kinds of coaches and established programs that really will put their great team on the floor every single night.

You know, we just have to learn to match it. We have to learn to walk into any environment and be able to compete with the very best, and that's what you're going to face every night in the Pac-12.

Q. Coach, how do you maintain patience when you know you're building your own program and you speak of your culture that you're building with these great seniors and some of your own veterans coming back? How do you stay patient, and yet in the same breath, you want nothing more than to have a great year for these two kids and the other seniors because you know the window is closing. How do you balance the patience and wanting to, darn it, get it done right now?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I'm not very patient, am I? I would have you come speak to my team. And we talk about that a lot, every single day or many days and when we start and end practice about the need for all of us to want to bring our best every single day and have an urgency in practice and in every opportunity that we have to be better and become better because, like you said, their window is closing. They need those two

freshman posts to be unbelievably good for us to have any kind of chance this year. So we have to depend on those young players to really grow up early, and we have to bring them along.

But again, we have to be patient to a degree, but I am not. For these people, I am not. We want this to be the best year that they've ever had, and we want to make sure that they become the very best players they can be so that they're well prepared for what they want to do when they leave our program.

Q. About a month before the season, how would you characterize your team right now?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Well, I really feel like we're in a great spot. I can't tell you -- probably last spring we had a little bit of a situation that really brought us together, and we had a great summer in training. And like I said, I think we're built to be more competitive this year, built in the sense of I think we're going to shoot the ball a little bit better than we did a year ago. Obviously, we have a great point guard and someone that can really be of the level and that's a great place to start.

We'll be young in the post, but I think we have more bodies and more fouls and more answers for the people that we're going to go against, more athleticism to be able to guard better and rebound better. And you know, again, I think we just have to learn -- and our system is just further along where we have to learn how to space the floor so that our play makers can make plays. And I think Bobi is going to have a lot more room to operate now, being on the perimeter, and so we've just got to be our best at making sure we get our best players in the best spots on the floor.

And again, what we were doing a year ago at this time is like -- I tried to say we were just eating baby food, and now at least we're starting to eat meat maybe. We're not doing things that we were doing a year ago, and it makes us be able to get ready for what we're going to face, which is an unbelievably difficult schedule. But like I said, something that we hope will prepare us for the Pac-12 and what we might face there.

Q. Is that the reasoning behind the non-conference tournament scheduling?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I lost my mind a tiny bit in scheduling. You know, we were in home and homes with some great programs that are close to us, Boise and Gonzaga and then BYU got on our schedule, so that in and of itself was enough. We went to the Virgin Islands without knowing the schedule, and so quite surprised when it was Baylor, South Carolina, and Indiana. I might be on the beach or on a Jet ski going the other way during the game, I don't know. And, Miami, we obviously knew what we were getting at

Miami.

So it's unbelievably hard, but I'm also -- it's where we want to go, and it's probably a little bit ambitious. But the bottom line is we need to play those people, and we need to prepare ourselves for just those types of teams that we're going to face in the Pac-12. And we'll be obviously very ready for that kind of competition having played these people. It is what it is this year. We're going to attack it and be excited to play it and see how we stand and then be very ready for Pac-12 to start.