Kim Mulkey, Baylor Head Coach

Q. Behind every great program there's a great coaching staff. Specifically coach Toyelle Wilson, how has she played a role getting to this level?

KIM MULKEY: That's my Yankee on the staff. She's a Jersey girl.

Toyelle, how she got here, her story is I played against her in the NCAA playoffs. She was a head coach at Prairie View. Didn't know Toyelle. Just watched her kids play, watched how she conducted her business in meetings, press conferences. I knew I wanted to hire a female. I interviewed her and the rest is history.

The area that Toyelle is so good at is, one, she has sat in a head coach's chair. Number two, she has grown in recruiting because at Prairie View, as she told me, sometimes you have to wait and get what others don't get. She said, Now I can go knock on a door because I'm in a program where we can go after those that we want to go after. She's just grown leaps and bounds in recruiting.

On the floor, she's particularly good on relating to the young kids. She can talk their language when she needs to. Sometimes she's a little harder on them than I am.

Toyelle is a piece of a great puzzle that I have. If you look at every coach I have, they have specific responsibilities that, one, I'm not good at or I don't want to do any more. They're up there in the film room as I speak to you guys.

Several have been with me a long time. I guess I'm blessed to have the kind of players I do. But really I'm blessed that I don't have a lot of turnover in my staff. I have three that have been head coaches that chose to come here to be assistant coaches, to be a part of a program like Baylor. Then I have those that don't aspire to be head coaches because they're content to be where they are.
Q. While Michigan was making their NCAA tournament debut yesterday, their players, they played a lot of WNIT games, that carried over in their composure. Did you see that carry over?

KIM MULKEY: The more you can play as you're building a program, the better you're going to be. We played in a post-season NIT one year. Lost in the championship game to Auburn.

So, yes, it is a carryover, particularly if you have a lot of underclassmen. If you’re losing a lot of seniors, it may not be as effective. But if you've got a lot of returning players that play a lot of minutes for you, the more you play, the better you get.

Kim, their coach, is one of my favorite people in the profession. She brought her kids with her. They came in the office. Just to hug those kids, it just makes you smile to have a coach like that in our profession.

Q. You have put up the numbers as a point guard, had some really good point guards, but you also play a lot of big girls and post players that you have here. Which would you rather have, the point guard, the difference maker, the leader, or someone inside that's got size?

KIM MULKEY: When you play the position, you're the extension of the coach on the floor. You're going to get all the grief. When I start getting on kids, I start with the point guard play. So that's probably the most vital position because they have to know every position on that floor. Those post players are so dependent on their guards, you can't throw it to yourself.

Then you turn it around a little bit and go, Well, you know, the rebounds don't happen if you don't have the bigs. I was blessed at Louisiana Tech to have great post play. The value of post play will never be undervalued from me. I played with the greatest in the game at Louisiana Tech. Now, they weren't 6'7", but they were the best of the best at that time.

You've got to have both. What has happened, and you see it in the NBA, is you don't have the big, big man hardly any more. Everybody wants to shoot the three, everybody wants to spread the floor. We figured out all those motion offenses. That's very good.

But I guarantee you, if a Wilt Chamberlain walked through that door that could dominate the paint, it would change their approach. You have to change with the personnel that you have.

I will never stop recruiting big players. But if we don't get big players, we'll change and meet what I've got to do to expose our kids' strengths.

Q. Specifically about Alexis, talk about her basketball IQ.

KIM MULKEY: It starts with her level of confidence. That kid has swag. She's had it from the time I've watched her play. I've been watching her since the seventh grade. It's not a turnoff type of swag. It's humble, sweet. But when you get on that floor, she's trying to beat you. If she needs to pump a fist, she'll do it. If she needs to tell Juicy, no, you go first, I'm not going first, when they're up here arguing about who is going to answer the question first.

She didn't want to mess up. Sometimes she's right. She can get, I don't want to say down on herself, but she can focus on that one mess-up and we've moved on to three more plays. She's learned how to move quickly from a mistake.

Tremendous quickness. I don't think she really uses her quickness the way she will before her career is
over. She can take off with a ball in her hands quicker than most people can run down the floor. But I think she is trying to prove and has proven through the years that I can run if I need to, but I want to show you I can find the open person, I can run an offense, not just an athlete out here playing basketball.

Alexis, she's just a player that I'm not surprised by her ability to just step in when Kristy got hurt. That's just not something that has shocked me.

Q. You obviously have to be somewhat familiar with Katelynn Flaherty. As a former point guard, to see what she's done this year in one season, what do you think of what she's done so far?

KIM MULKEY: Yesterday was my first time to actually see her in person. I've read about her, watched her very little on TV because we just don't get very many games in your conference.

But she is the engine to their team. She puts up a lot of shots. She creates a lot of shots for her teammates. Her size, she's not six foot out there on the perimeter, she does it as a normal-sized guard.

I watched a lot of her game yesterday, for obvious reasons, in case we played them. But the respect I have for how she involves everybody on her team. Even though she puts up a lot of shots, she involves everybody on that court in some capacity.

Q. Juicy, Alexis, Didi, do you ever have to pull them aside and say, You have a lot of raw talent, you can be as good as you want to be? Do you have to tell them they can be so much better than they already are?

KIM MULKEY: First of all, when you recruit them, you tell them how good they are. You also tell them the truth on what I think you can do even better. Their personalities are just three totally different kids.

With Juicy, when she told you she has to learn to communicate more, she's a quiet kid, she's a happy kid, a pleasant kid. She just spent an hour after practice the other day because a teacher that's in hospice care just wanted to see her. She went from practice and just spent an hour with that lady. Knowing Juicy, she probably didn't open her mouth. She was just hugging that lady and holding her hand.

You have to understand Juicy's personality, how hard you can get on her, what motivates her. That takes time. I think you're just seeing a kid that she's just taken off. It's like a flower. She's opening up. It's happening for her.

She has as good a range. I've always said the greatest perimeter shooter that I ever coached was Emily Niemann. I only got to coach her two years here. She was the MVP of our 2005 championship game. When she missed a perimeter three, you were like, Are you kidding me? That's how good a shooter she was.

I think Juicy's range, her ability to score the basketball from way out there. Look at her percentage. It's pretty darn good. She missed her first two shots yesterday. I was wondering how she would handle that.

Then you move to Didi Richards, who I think people need to talk about this kid more. Her value to our team, I couldn't believe she didn't make all freshman team in our league. What she brings is length. She brings quickness. She brings a little nastiness when she has to go in there and bang with the bigs.
You can't go to practice and be in a bad mood around her. She's a happy kid. She dances. She laughs. She tells jokes. She'll come up and play with my hair. She makes you enjoy what you do.

Then you go to Alexis, who is a little bit harder on herself. Didi is hard on herself. I have to get her through mistakes because she dwells on the bad. I have to make her understand you have to forget about it.

Alexis wants to play the perfect game. There is no such thing. Yet Alexis, you know, she'll miss two or three shots, she'll go, My shot is off.

I'm like, Really? Just keep playing.

So they want to do good. Their ceiling is unbelievable. You're going into, what, the second round of the playoffs with a freshman and a sophomore backcourt filling in for a sophomore and a senior that played a lot of minutes. They act like they belong. They expect to be good.

Q. What has stood out to you about the way Dekeiya, Alexis and Juicy play together for you in the backcourt?
KIM MULKEY: Kristy is Dekeiya's buddy. They know each other well. Kristy probably knows where to get Dekeiya the ball a little bit better than Alexis does.

But I think Juicy has become more comfortable with Dekeiya because they've been on the floor two years together. I think Alexis' job is a little more difficult because she has to learn every one of them's strengths and weaknesses. Does this one like the ball here? Can this one get out and run with me? Is this one capable of guarding somebody off the dribble? How much do I have to help her? That just comes with playing time.

I think Kristy's injury happened so late in the year, the only way that you fix that or the only way you get that is playing. The more they can play together, I think they'll kind of be able to figure some of those things on the floor out.

Q. What do you expect to see from them defensively? You talked about Flaherty. They have the inside girl, Thome. What about that matchup inside?
KIM MULKEY: It's a good matchup for us because they have the big girl, we have the big girl. They've got a defensive stopper in Dunston, two all conference performers. I think the matchups are good position by position.

What do I expect to see? All I can tell you is what I've seen on film and prepare for it. Sometimes a three quarter press, 1-2-2, 2-3. I mean, there's nothing Michigan can throw at us that we haven't seen. There's only so much you can do in the game of basketball defensively. You're not going to come in here and change who you are offensively. We're going to have to guard them. We understand the problems they present.

But at this stage, you might tweak an inbound, you might tweak something in a timeout, but you are who you are. We'll prepare for every defense possible that we may see.

Grambling did exactly what we thought they would do. We were prepared for it. We'll be prepared for anything they throw at us, traps, presses, zones, just anything. You never know with our two bigs what
you might see.

Q. You were a 4.0 student in high school, I don't know what it was in college.
KIM MULKEY: 3.82. Zoology and accounting. So I wasn't going to become a science teacher or an accountant, but that was my two Bs.

Q. I know about your rule that retired jerseys are for those who have to graduate to get that done. How much does that play into what you do when you recruit a point guard, if anything at all?
KIM MULKEY: Well, with the NCAA rules the way they are, I'm not going to recruit one that's not going to be eligible. The facilities, the resources, everything we have here, as difficult as it is academically, you're not going to fail here. You can't fail here unless you just don't go to class. You're going to go to class if you play for me. That's why our graduation rate is what it is.

Then you have a private school setting of 16,000, 17,000 students. You're not a Social Security number. How big is Michigan enrollment?

Q. 35, 40 (thousand).
KIM MULKEY: You have some schools 50, 60 in your league. We're not that type of environment. So when you go to class here, they know who you are. They are going to sit down and I've never met a professor that wants a kid to fail. When you're in large, large classrooms, they could care less. They don't know who you are.

Just like when I leave here, I can remember just about every one of you here, what questions you asked, where you stood. That's what Baylor is about. You have teachers that come to your games. You have teachers that will put you in a position to be successful. If they can't help you, our academic people are on top of things. Then my academic coach is on top of things.

I don't go out there and go, God, I can't recruit that kid, she can't make it at Baylor, she's going to fail out. I've never approached it that way.

It is hard to get in school at Baylor if you weren't an athlete, NCAA eligible. I don't know what the requirements are. It's expensive to go to school at Baylor, but most private schools are.

Q. You talked about a lot the other day going to the neutral sites didn't work. For the teams like Michigan that are trying to make a run, how hard is that for them? Do you have any suggestions on what the NCAA should do to make it a little more equitable?
KIM MULKEY: I was hired here in 2000. You know how many games they won before I got here?

Q. I don't.
KIM MULKEY: Seven. You got to go build your program. The NCAA Selection Committee doesn't go, I like Coach Mulkey, because they don't. They say, What 16 teams have proven themselves through the course of the year? I went to Duke my very first NCAA tournament, my very first year, played Arkansas and lost in the first round.

You have to build your program and commit to your program and have the resources and the administration that will help you build it.

It seems like it's a disadvantage, but really it lies on the coach, the school, and the administrators to
build a top 16 program. It doesn't lie on the Selection Committee.

That's what we did here. Every year we kept digging, we just kept staying hungry. We don't want to let go of that. I'm just telling you, I've been around the game a long time. You can't go to neutral sites in the women's game. You will see all across, back in the day when I played, Louisiana Tech, Stephen F. Austin, those gyms were packed.

In fact, I'll tell this quick story. Karl Malone played at Louisiana Tech when I did, and we didn't play doubleheaders. It was a cult following during the early '80s for the women's basketball program.

You just have to build it. When you build it, you'll be rewarded with that.

What are our options? We tried the options. It just didn't work. It didn't work. You got a great coach. She has a lot of energy. She does it the right way. She's one of my favorites in the business. I'm going to leave here now and take her three children Easter baskets. That's not an NCAA violation, is it? Got chocolate in it, a little iTunes card. They're young, okay?

It's good to see her have her program here. I understand. Nobody wants to go on anybody else's home court. I get it. But just keep building your program, and someday you will host it. Then those teams will have to come to your home court.

Dekeiya Cohen, Baylor Forward
Q. Dekeiya, obviously your senior year. You played basketball your whole life. Do you have any particular superstitions that you have to do on game day, night before?
DEKEIYA COHEN: The only thing I have is the pregame nap. It's my ritual. Other than that, no.

I don't listen to music before games most of the time. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. I don't really have too many superstitions.

Q. Dekeiya, you're a senior on this team, you're in your fourth NCAA tournament. How important is that experience playing against a Michigan team that maybe doesn't have the experience you do?
DEKEIYA COHEN: It means a lot to us really, just knowing how everything works, going to the tournament, how important it is to take it one game at a time when you're going deeper into the tournament. It definitely gives us an advantage, the fact that a lot of us have been there before.

For the freshmen, us having experience helps them out really because we can, like, give them some insight as to what's going on.

Q. Dekeiya, what is it like to be able to know that it took you time to be able to get quality minutes, not that you didn't have some early? You've become a major force. To be able to do that as you close out your career?
DEKEIYA COHEN: It means a lot to me just knowing that everything has paid off. Waiting and putting my time in is all paying off this year. Just to see that happen is pretty great.

I think it couldn't come at a better time really. I mean, we're making a good run in this tournament. We had a great season. So just being able to contribute toward that means a lot to me.
Q. Dekeiya, you start the year with Natalie and Kristy as your backcourt. What have you seen from these two as they've taken over in those roles?
DEKEIYA COHEN: I've seen them getting a lot more confidence. I see them become more leaders on the court. Like she said, more vocal. They stepped up in every way we needed them to.

Juicy, she's a shooter. She's been shooting the ball well. Lex, she's a scoring point guard, and she's been doing that well, too.

I mean, they've done everything we can ask. We're happy to have them on our team because most people, it's hard for them to step up when the opportunity knocks, but they've done a great job with it.

Alexis Morris, Baylor Guard
Q. Alexis and Juicy, with what you have done with the guard position, what does it mean when you actually are given the opportunity, someone believes in you, then you gain even more trust by your play?
ALEXIS MORRIS: For me as a freshman, it means a lot because being a freshman. I'm young. It's harder for me to gain Coach Mulkey's trust than it would be for a junior or somebody else who has already been here. It means a lot to me. I value it.

Q. Alexis, being a freshman, what would you say is the biggest point in your game? What has changed the most from when you first walked onto the campus to where you are now as a player?
ALEXIS MORRIS: I would say maturity on the court. Like in practice when I first came here, I would always get mad at myself, get down on myself, just bring this bad energy into practice, kind of just being selfish.

I think I've grown in that area. I can't be like that now, being a starting point guard. I have to grow in that area. That would be it.

Juicy Landrum, Baylor Guard
Q. Alexis and Juicy, with what you have done with the guard position, what does it mean when you actually are given the opportunity, someone believes in you, then you gain even more trust by your play?
JUICY LANDRUM: For me, it means a lot to me also. Like last year sitting down, but I learned a lot from Alexis Jones and Alexis Prince, playing behind them every day in practice. It means a lot to get this opportunity to be able to start and, like, help the team.

Q. Juicy, now that you have a big impact role on this team, where have you seen your game change the most?
JUICY LANDRUM: I would say my defense, like my communication on the court. Like last year, I know I wasn't, like, the best defender. I'm probably still not the best defender. I make a few mistakes. I just don't let myself get down. When I make a mistake, I move past it.

My communication skills have gotten better.

Q. Juicy, for you being a Waco native, how special was it coming out in the starting lineup yesterday?
JUICY LANDRUM: I mean, it was great really to be able to host the first two rounds here, have my mom and my dad. My dad didn’t get to see my freshman year. It was great having my dad in the stands and my mom.