

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 25, 2016

## Chris Beard

Texas Tech Red Raiders



THE MODERATOR: Coach Beard, welcome to the Big 12, and your thoughts about the season?

CHRIS BEARD: Good morning. We're excited. It's an exciting time of year. Anybody involved in basketball, opening night in the NBA tonight, college coming quickly, so just really proud and thankful to be back in the Big 12 coaching at Texas Tech, and we're off to a really good start.

**Q. Chris, it's been pretty well documented, but what was it about Lubbock that made it such a good fit for you at that time, especially just having taken another job? Not a bad job, but what was it that drew you back to Texas Tech?**

CHRIS BEARD: Well, I'm from the state of Texas. I grew up in the Dallas area. So a lot of my friends and family live in Texas, as well as I've recruited the state my whole career. Obviously I had ten years at Texas Tech, eight with Coach Knight and two with Pat, so it's a place I'm very familiar.

But probably more important than that was just the opportunity to coach in the Big 12, which in my opinion is the best league in college basketball. I got into coaching years ago to coach the best players and to play on the highest stage, and I think the Big 12 gives us the opportunity to do that.

**Q. You've got to put together a roster with a lot of newcomers. First of all, the two graduate transfer guys, can you just break them down for us how they're going to fit in? Are these guys are going to get a lot of minutes right away?**

CHRIS BEARD: Yeah, so we had three graduate transfers on this year's team. Thomas Brandsma came with us from Little Rock. Anthony Livingston is a transfer from Arkansas State. And Giovanni McLean is a transfer from Quinnipiac. So all three of those guys we look to contribute early and be a big part of our team. Not only on stats and production on a stat sheet and minutes played, but also in leadership. Here's three guys that are very experienced. Not necessarily at the Big 12 level, but they've all played minutes in the Division I level. So we think they could be helpful to us early.

**Q. I know kind of piggybacking off what Chuck's question was, but I've got to ask, what was it like to walk back in United Spirit Arena as the head coach, and to walk back into the locker room as the head coach?**

CHRIS BEARD: Lots of memories. Fair question. I'd like to downplay it and say it was just another business-type day, but it wasn't. Certainly a big factor is my three daughters. They live in Abilene, Texas, which is about two hours from Lubbock. So the first time I went back to the United Spirit Supermarkets Arena, Avery, Ella, and Margo were there, so from a personal standpoint, it was a great memory. But I'm excited for the challenge. Coaching in the Big 12. I take the responsibility very seriously. I think there's a lot of great people in Lubbock. Our university is first class, and it's time for us to have a nationally competitive basketball program. Everybody in our program feels the urgency of this, of certainly being able to come back home to my home state and coaching in the Big 12 has been special.

**Q. A lot of times when there's a coaching change you're kind of getting in and rebuilding something. But Tech's on an upswing. Can you talk about the challenges of keeping it on that trajectory?**

CHRIS BEARD: Yeah, I don't consider our job a rebuild at all. I have a lot of respect for Tubby Smith and his staff and the job they did. We inherited a great foundation. In this year's team we have 12 players that are going to be on the active roster. I believe seven of those are returners and five newcomers. The balance of our program, we have eight returners and eight new players. So I think our job is to try to take the program to the next level.

I think the one group of people that always gets kind of lost in coaching changes is the seniors. A lot of times you'll hear things like the first year doesn't matter or here's a mull begin or wait till you get your guys in. I never believed that. I respectfully disagreed. These players are my players. These players are our players and we look forward to having a competitive season.

These seniors, and there are six of them, they're special guys. They're the backbone and foundation of our program. They don't have a second year, this is it. So I take the responsibility to put those guys in a competitive situation early very serious. I appreciate

the returning seniors trusting us in their senior season, and I appreciate the new seniors trusting us in their last year of college basketball.

So we don't look at this as a rebuild. We look at this as an opportunity to be competitive this year, and that's our focus.

**Q. A lot of coaches of the majors and low majors have been really critical of the fifth-year transfer rule, especially when kids transfer up from high school. You've been on both sides of it at Little Rock and out here. Just your thoughts on the rule? What do you think is fair, and would you like to see it changed at all?**

CHRIS BEARD: I've got enough to worry about trying to coach in this league and coaching this talent that I don't spend much time thinking about the rules. That's not my job. What we do is try to gain an advantage in every situation. So I think just with everything, there's positives and negatives. But certainly with a grad transfer rule it allows guys to, number one, continue their education. And Thomas and Gio and Anthony are all serious about getting their master's degrees, so that's the first part. But, secondly, it gives us a chance to put competitive, talented people on the floor immediately.

We have a unique team. I've been told this week we might be the oldest team in college basketball. And like I tell the guys all the time, there is no relationship between age and winning. If there was, I would just recruit a bunch of old guys.

But what I do think could be an identity of our team is experience and maturity. If we can take this age and turn it into experience and maturity, I think it could really help us with our first team, and that's what we intend to do.

**Q. Coach, I'm old enough that I'm not going to date myself on when you were a graduate assistant at Incarnate Word. But how does it feel to be able to, in your first stint as a head coach here, go back and play in the school that you started out with?**

CHRIS BEARD: Yeah, it's going to be a special game. I mean, my journey has been long, but I'm really thankful for our players. I wouldn't be sitting here today if I wouldn't have coached great players at Fort Scott and Seminole and Myrtle Beach and MacMurray and Angelo State and Little Rock. I think a coach is only as good as his players. This is a talent business, and I've coached some good ones. The exciting thing about this year at Texas Tech is we have good players. Not only talented guys, but special people, and I feel very special to coach these guys. We've got four players here today representing at Media Day that many of you

will get to meet in the next couple hours. But we have good players at Texas Tech, I look forward to coaching them, and I think we're going to have a good season because of these players.

**Q. Can you talk about the Stevenson kid, the junior college transfer from Kansas?**

CHRIS BEARD: Yeah, we've got some very good junior college players on our roster. I'm a former junior college coach. I take a lot of pride in that. But Niem's a special player. He's a two-time All-American; that those of us that are associated with junior college basketball like myself understand that's very difficult to do, to be a First Team All-American as a freshman and back it up as a sophomore. But Niem's a Texas kid, he's from Dallas. Played for great coaches, Seward County in Coach Zollinger and Coach Nee (phonetic). And he's a guy we think can contribute early. He's got great size for a guard. He's a good leader. He loves basketball. He has a passion for basketball. He's in the gym a lot. I think Niem could be one of the best newcomers in the Big 12 this year.