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NOVEMBER 2025

INSIDE:
THE TRUTH ABOUT
KYREN LACY



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COVER 2, PAGE 3

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Sophomore tight end **Trey'Dez Green** has been one of the few bright spots on LSU's offense this season.
Photo by: LSU Athletics

TREY'DEZ GREEN

Trey'Dez Green is a 6-foot-7, 240-pound sophomore tight end for LSU who's quickly become one of the SEC's most captivating young playmakers.

A native of Jackson, Louisiana, Green starred at East Feliciana and Zachary High, dominating in football (53 catches, 960 yards, 12 TDs as a senior) and averaging 27 points and 11 rebounds per game on the basketball court.

A consensus five-star recruit, he arrived in Baton Rouge in 2024 and made an immediate impact as a freshman, hauling in 13 passes for 101 yards and four touchdowns across 13 games. Under coordinator Joe Sloan in 2025, Green has exploded: 15 receptions, 210 yards and three scores through five contests, including a game-winning TD at Clemson and a historic 119-yard outing versus South Carolina.

His freakish catch radius, body control from basketball and red-zone prowess force defenses to adjust on every snap. Poised for 40+ catches, Green projects as an eventual first-round NFL draft pick and remains LSU's most dynamic mismatch weapon. 

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Flau'Jae Johnson, Kim Mulkey.
Photo by: LSU Athletics



GLENN GUILBEAU

Tiger Rag Editor

More and more, LSU's Brian Kelly looks like another average-to-bad football coach hire by LSU athletic director Scott Woodward, like Steve Sarkisian and Jimbo Fisher before him.

Hired at approximately \$10 million a year for 10 years after the 2021 regular season, Kelly came to LSU with a national championship contract already in his possession. Not only hasn't he won one, he hasn't even been close to the playoffs.

Fisher at least won a national title at Florida State in 2013 before Woodward broke the bank to get him to Texas A&M at \$75 million over 10 years after the 2017 season.

Fisher has been out of coaching since the end of the 2023 season when he walked away from A&M with the largest buyout in college football history at \$76 million. Penn State's James Franklin, meanwhile, just walked off with a mere \$49 million buyout.

Kelly, who would have six years remaining on his contract after this season, would be owed a \$53 million buyout if fired without cause as of Dec. 1. That sounds like enough cause to seriously reconsider the future of Woodward and his wayward spending at LSU. Remember, fired coach Ed Orgeron just finished getting paid from his ridiculous buyout, courtesy of Woodward.

Yes, baseball and women's basketball national championships are great, and Woodward hired Jay Johnson and Kim Mulkey, respectively, for that. But LSU is a football school. You can go look that up in the LSU library, but watch out for the mold.

Kelly has not done badly at LSU – 10-4 and 6-2 (West title), 10-3 and 6-2 and 9-4 and 5-3 in his first three seasons, and he could finish in that fashion this season after dropping to 5-2 and 2-2 in the SEC with the 31-24 loss at Vanderbilt.

But those are Les Miles numbers after his 2007-08 national title and 2011-12 national champion runner-up. From 2012-15, Miles' Kelly-like 10- and 9-win seasons with an 8-win drop over that span got him fired in 2016 after a 2-2 start.

This was supposed to be Kelly's national championship contending season with returning senior starting quarterback

ATHLETIC DIRECTOR SCOTT WOODWARD SHOULD NOT HIRE LSU'S NEXT FOOTBALL COACH

Garrett Nussmeier and an \$18 million roster. Before November even dawned, the playoffs were fantasy.

The reality is LSU is not going to the playoffs for a fourth straight season under a \$10 million-a-year coach hired to win a national championship like the three coaches before him.

Another reality is the fact that Woodward – curiously known as this great coaching headhunter – has hired exactly one great football coach in his athletic director career at Washington, Texas A&M and LSU. And that was Chris Petersen in 2013. Sarkisian was good, but not a great hire at Washington and later at USC. He is only looking better recently at Texas, but still not great. Fisher was average. And Kelly is somewhere between Fisher and Sarkisian – closer to Fisher.

Do not be shocked if LSU and Kelly arrive at a financial agreement with Kelly walking away with something less than that buyout. Because when LSU and its money people really want to do something, they tend to find the money.

And if that happens this year or next, Woodward should not be the athletic director that makes LSU's next football hire.

Glenn Guilbeau is the editor of Tiger Rag and a columnist. A member of the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, he previously was a national columnist at OutKick.com/FOX News and covered LSU for USA Today Network and the Baton Rouge Advocate. Reach him at glenn@tigerrag.com.



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THE LOSS AT VANDERBILT WAS BRIAN KELLY'S LAST STRAW FOR MANY LSU FANS

LSU finally played complementary football at Vanderbilt on Oct. 18, but not in a good way.

The Tigers' defense couldn't stop Vanderbilt and quarterback Diego Pavia until it was too late, because by then in the fourth quarter, the offense could no longer move the football.

And LSU lost, 31-24, dropping it to 5-2 overall, 2-2 in the SEC and in grave danger of not reaching the College Football Playoff for the fourth straight year under coach Brian Kelly and sixth overall. A

day later, the Tigers plummeted to No. 20 in the nation from No. 10.

And readers responded.

... "They don't even belong in the top 25." ... David Gilmore.

... "Um, if the offensive line has been playing at its very best," wrote Adam Seghers in response to Kelly saying his team would continue to play at its very best the rest of the season, "then they should be ashamed."

... "Why you commit to a 10-year contract to a GOOD coach like Brian Kelly confounds me. Pay only GREAT coaches that kind of money. ... Kenny Laborde.

Former LSU national champion defensive tackle Breiden Fehoko also chimed in.

... "You know what pisses me off the most about the Vanderbilt loss?" he asked. "Their fans didn't even storm the field. That told me they expected to win. That should tell you everything you need to know about what people think about LSU."

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PRESENTED BY



T-Bob Hebert
@TBob53

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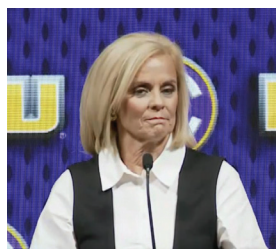
Everyone is overpaid and underperforming, satisfied to go home to their bank accounts.

There's no toughness to this team and no toughness to this program.

LSU has forgotten the face of its father.



Matthew Brune
@MatthewBrune_



Kim Mulkey takes the podium at SEC Media Days and starts talking about her offense

"We are pretty stacked at guard. We're experienced. We brought in newcomers that are quick. Your bigs also have to get down the court... Nobody wants to come watch you walk the ball up the court."



Glenn Guilbeau
@SportBeatTweet

Tiger Rag Exclusive: "I'm not thinking, 'Oh, man, I've got to win this number of games. I've got to advance this far in the Tournament.'" But LSU basketball coach Matt McMahon must improve significantly.



Jacques Doucet
@JacquesDoucet

"I believe this 85-player roster is good enough to be in the 12-team playoff. I don't think that's particularly close in my opinion."

@LSUfootball could be wasting a \$20 million dollar roster, says @PGuy77



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AMID LSU STRUGGLES, KELLY'S \$100M CONTRACT LOOMS LARGE WITH \$38M PAID, STEEP BUYOUTS

By TODD HORNE, Tiger Rag Vice President / Executive Editor

As LSU faces a midseason slump in October 2025, head coach Brian Kelly's 10-year, \$100 million contract is both a sign of ambition and a financial shield against rising fan frustration. Kelly, who turned 64 on Oct. 25, joined from Notre Dame as the Tigers rebuilt after Ed Orgeron's sudden departure in 2021. His contract, effective from 2022 through 2031, has already paid him nearly \$38 million over three seasons and part of the current campaign. With the Tigers at 5-2 overall and 2-2 in the SEC after a 31-24 loss to Vanderbilt on Oct. 18, the buyout clauses — a potential \$53 million payout if Kelly is fired without cause — highlight the risks in college football's unpredictable environment.

The deal guarantees \$100 million, excluding incentives. It includes a \$400,000 annual base salary, a \$500,000 longevity bonus each July, and rising supplemental pay from \$8.6 million in 2022 to \$9.6 million in 2031. Built-in raises of \$200,000 every two years ensure steady growth. Winning the SEC championship or the College Football Playoff triggers extra pay: \$250,000 for an SEC title and \$500,000 for a national championship, both fully guaranteed. Performance incentives total \$1.325 million per year. These include \$500,000 for bowl eligibility with six wins, increasing amounts for more victories — \$50,000 for seven, \$75,000 for eight, and up to \$250,000 for twelve. Additionally, \$75,000 is awarded for SEC Championship participation, another \$75,000 for winning it, \$150,000 for an SEC title, and \$500,000 for a national championship. Academic achievements also add \$50,000 for meeting NCAA GPA standards, and coaching awards yield \$75,000.

In 2023, a contract amendment cut the 2023 bowl eligibility bonus to \$100,000

after a 10-3 season, but other terms remain unchanged. So far, payouts reflect Kelly's mixed results. In 2022, his first year, LSU went 10-4, winning the Citrus Bowl 63-7 against Purdue after losing to Georgia in the SEC Championship. Kelly earned \$9.81 million: \$9.5 million guaranteed and \$310,000 in incentives for nine wins, an SEC Championship appearance, bowl eligibility, and academics. The 2023 season ended with a 10-3 record and a 35-31 victory in the ReliaQuest Bowl against Wisconsin, earning him \$9.975 million, including the amended bowl payout.

In 2024, LSU finished 9-4 after an 8-4 regular season, capped by a 44-31 Texas Bowl victory over Baylor. Kelly ended the season with a defiant promise of aiming for national glory. Compensation for 2024 matched 2023 at \$9.975 million, including \$675,000 in incentives. As of Oct. 21, 2025, Kelly has received a prorated \$8.195 million of the scheduled \$10.175 million for Year 4. No incentives are finalized yet, but six wins secure at least \$500,000 for bowl eligibility if the season ends 6-6 or better. Cumulative payouts total \$37.955 million, or 38% of the guaranteed total, leaving \$62.045 million over the final six years.

The contract's buyout clauses, among the highest in college football, discourage hasty decisions. If LSU fires Kelly without cause, they owe him 90% of the remaining guaranteed compensation as of Dec. 1. For Dec. 1, 2025, that amounts to \$53.294 million on \$59.215 million remaining through 2031. The amount decreases yearly: \$45.09 million in 2026, \$36.45 million in 2027, and \$9.45 million by 2030. A national title raises the payout to 100%—\$59.2 million—and guarantees the balance. Payments can be made in

lump sums or installments, influenced by Kelly's efforts to find another job.

If Kelly leaves voluntarily, such as for an NFL job, he owes LSU liquidated damages. Through June 30, 2026, that amounts to \$13.333 million, dropping from \$20 million in the first two years. It decreases to \$10 million in 2027, \$6.667 million in 2028, and \$3.333 million in 2029, with no penalty after that. The clauses, governed by Louisiana law, reflect LSU's caution post-Orgeron. Orgeron received a \$16.9 million buyout in 2021; Kelly's is significantly higher, ranking ninth nationally.

Current tensions raise the stakes. After a strong 6-1 start in 2024, LSU faced losses to Texas A&M, Alabama, and Florida. A recent Vanderbilt win over LSU—Vandy's first since 1990—has put offensive coordinator Joe Sloan under pressure, with fans demanding his dismissal to protect Kelly. Last offseason brought drama when prized recruit QB Bryce Underwood, committed to LSU, switched to Michigan for a reported \$10-12 million NIL deal. Kelly responded by rallying donors with a personal \$1 million pledge, boosting the transfer portal class to number one nationally. He now calls the 2025 roster his "best ever" at LSU, with \$18 million invested.

Kelly's record stood at 34-13 overall and 19-9 in the SEC (10-22-25), with back-to-back 10-win seasons in 2022-23 but no playoff appearances. Perks include a \$780,000 interest-free mortgage and \$1 million life insurance, plus NIL support for recruits. As LSU hosted Texas A&M on Oct. 25, Kelly's contract provides time, but in a league where Les Miles was fired mid-2016 despite a 110-32 record, the buyouts remind all: security has a price, and patience is running thin in Baton Rouge. **TR**

Former LSU star wide receiver **Kyren Lacy** took his own life on April 12, 2025, in Houston.
Photo by: Jonathan Mailhes

CAJUN JUSTICE?

THE DEATHS OF FORMER U.S. MARINE HERMAN HALL AND FORMER LSU STAR PLAYER KYREN LACY WERE TRAGIC ENOUGH BEFORE A KEYSTONE COPS-LIKE INVESTIGATION ENSUED

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

Remember that television show on A&E in 2012 called “Cajun Justice” that was set on the bayous of South Louisiana in Terrebonne Parish?

Well, life has been unfortunately imitating art 13 years later in neighboring Lafourche Parish in the tragic stories of

former U.S. Marine Herman Hall and former LSU star wide receiver Kyren Lacy of Thibodaux.

The Louisiana State Police has maintained that Lacy caused a fatal car wreck near Thibodaux on Dec. 17, 2024, since January after its “investigation.” That

led to his arrest that January on felony negligent homicide, reckless driving and hit-and-run charges.

But a crash investigation by the Lafourche Parish District Attorney’s office of April 11 cleared Lacy of causing the wreck because of his Dodge Charger’s [cont. next page](#)

72-yard distance from the multi-car crash that killed Hall, 77, in another vehicle.

It is not and has not ever been disputed by any entity that Lacy was indeed driving recklessly while passing four cars in a no-passing zone at speeds up to 88 mph in a 40 mph zone on Highway 20 in Chackbay. That is on police video.

The crux of this emotional argument is if Lacy caused the accident, because as recklessly as he was driving, he could have slowed or stopped in time so as not to cause the actual multi-car crash. The crash is not on any video made public as of yet. Another driver possibly caused the crash by tailgating.

"Kyren Lacy was driving an average of 88 mph while passing with a posted speed limit of 40 mph," states the last paragraph of the 13-page Lafourche Parish District Attorney's office crash investigation received by Tiger Rag.

"Bryahna Gray was following too close, which caused her to take evasive action to avoid hitting the back of Dennis Simon's truck," the DA office report continues. "The evidence submitted in the crash report does not support that Kyren Lacy should have known that his actions were the cause of the crash that happened approximately 72 yards in front of him."

That DA report was highlighted in an interview on Friday, Oct. 3, of Lacy's attorney Matthew Ory of Houma on HTV (Houma Television) that criticized State Police and went viral nationally over that weekend and became a national story.

Ory, armed with the above Lafourche Parish DA's investigation of the accident that shot holes in the January State Police report, was expecting his client to be exonerated on April 14 before the grand jury.

"This never survives a grand jury," Ory said in the Oct. 3 interview. "Never ever survives a grand jury. We were 48 hours from this report getting to the grand jury."

But on Saturday night, April 12, in Houston, Lacy committed suicide by shooting himself during a police chase after visiting family in Houston.

"Kyren Lacy went to Houston that Friday with his mind made," Ory said and grew emotional. "He was suffering. He wanted the keys to his vehicle (from his family) to, I don't know how to say this."

"To take his life?," HTV interviewer Martin Folsie asked.

"Yes," said Ory, who has been in close contact with Lacy's family since January of 2025 when he began representing Lacy.

A Lacy family member called police after Lacy left in his car that night. A Houston Police car followed him at normal speed. Lacy's family later said they believe Lacy noticed the car, panicked with the grand jury date two days away, and shot himself. Lacy's family had apparently dealt with erratic behavior with Kyren Lacy previously.

STATE TROOPER: "BUT THE CHARGER WAS COMING RIGHT AT YOU, CORRECT? THAT'S WHY YOU HAD TO SLAM ON YOUR BRAKES. SO, YEAH, MAKE SURE YOU INCLUDE THAT. THAT'S VERY IMPORTANT, BECAUSE WE'RE TRYING TO LOCATE THIS CHARGER RIGHT NOW. SO, INCLUDE THAT IN THE STATEMENT. AND I'LL READ IT OVER."

"Young parents, start talking to your kids at a very early age and make sure they are confident and comfortable confiding in you," Kyren Lacy's father Kenny Lacy said on Facebook on Sunday, April 13.

"Don't be cool with, 'I'm all right.' Or, 'I'm good;' when you know deep down something isn't right," Lacy's dad continued. "Mental health is real, and for the most part, it's invisible. Don't ignore the signs."

The HTV special included a potentially incriminating video of a State Police Troop C officer allegedly suggesting that a witness he was interviewing finger Lacy for the wreck. But the witness clearly pointed to another driver:

STATE TROOPER: "Just make sure you add in there that you had to slam on your brakes to avoid that Charger (Lacy's car), and the brakes locked up to avoid that Charger."

DRIVER: "That lady (Bryahna Gray) in the back of me, she didn't see what was

happening. That's how she caused that wreck. She was going to run into the back of me, and she pulled onto the other side."

TROOPER: "But the Charger was coming right at you, correct? That's why you had to slam on your brakes. So, yeah, make sure you include that. That's very important, because we're trying to locate this Charger right now. So, include that in the statement. And I'll read it over."

Concerning the above exchange, the DA crash report states, "In both recorded conversations with Dennis Simon, the Trooper kept trying to advise Dennis Simon that he had to lock up his brakes to avoid Kyren Lacy."

Wow, why didn't the trooper just fill out Simon's statement himself. Ory said Simon refused to sign his statement taken with the trooper.

"I can't make this up," Ory said. "This is what people just don't get to see. You saw video. You just saw a statement where somebody (the state trooper) tells them what to say. He (the witness) tells him that's not what happened," Ory shouted.

The DA crash report also quotes Gray, who clearly was a distracted driver, who "didn't see what was happening," as Simon said.

"I'm eating my Funyuns," she said. "I got them in the middle of my lap and driving. I'm listening to my music."

State Police responded to that interview the following Tuesday with its own video and accompanying statements, but it did not address the trooper's above exchange with Simon or Gray's statements.

"As part of our commitment to transparency, the State Police has released the full crash report, multiple witness statements, and additional video evidence surrounding the December 17, 2024, fatal crash on Louisiana Highway 20," State Police superintendent Colonel Robert Hodges says.

"Following the crash, State Police conducted a detailed investigation with the assistance of crash reconstruction experts and all available information at the time. The investigative findings were reviewed in consultation with the Lafourche Parish District Attorney's Office to determine the appropriate charges. The findings were presented to the 17th Judicial District Court, which approved an arrest warrant for Kyren Lacy. While we recog-

nize that external narratives may arise, often based on selective information, we urge the public to rely on the full body of facts.”

It should be noted that the above State Police report could also be using “selective information.” Ory sure thinks so.

And it should be noted that the Louisiana State Police’s recent reputation has featured credibility issues. Federal authorities last January released the findings of an investigation that revealed patterns of unlawful conduct within the Louisiana State Police, including troopers’ use of excessive force, lack of accountability and other problems in “every corner of the state.”

On Monday, Oct. 6 – three days after Ory’s appearance on HTV in Houma, the Louisiana Attorney General’s office announced it would conduct its own investigation of the State Police’s crash investigation.

“I have been in touch with Louisiana State Police about independently reviewing all the witness statements and evidence in this case,” Attorney General Liz Murrill said.

Murrill added another statement a day later that was contradictory like so much of this entire fiasco.

“The Lafourche Parish District Attorney’s Office was prepared to present the case to a grand jury that showed Kyren Lacy returning to his lane,” she said. “However, that does not absolve Kyren Lacy of responsibility. Every witness identified the Charger Lacy was driving as having put the events in motion that led to the head-on collision. The District Attorney appropriately was bringing the matter to a grand jury, so the grand jury could review the facts and decide the appropriate charges to indict on, if any.”

Murrill said “every witness” said Lacy “put the events in motion that led” to the wreck. Uh, not Dennis Simon. He said it was Bryahna Gray, who caused the wreck.

In the same statement Murrill said Lacy set the events in motion for the fatal wreck and the grand jury would decide the appropriate charges, but then adds, “if any.”

Obviously, he was at least going to be charged with reckless driving. Call it Cajun Justice.

Everything with this case, including the State Police video and the video with the Ory interview on HTV, are inconclusive. None of the videos show the actual wreck. With that not yet on any released videos, many officials are just educated guessing. Others are just guessing.

In addition, the witnesses interviewed in the State Police and HTV videos do not seem to know what the hell happened and continually contradict themselves and others. A source told Tiger Rag that the State Police’s interview of 18-wheeler driver Deon Howard in the Astros shirt – popularly used inappropriately by scores of national media – was so disjointed and contradictory, it was later virtually dismissed.

“I’m continuing to review the entire file from State Police and will release a more detailed statement at the conclusion of that review,” Murrill said.

Good luck with that.

... Until the next episode of Cajun Justice. **TR**



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11/5

HAPPY 33RD BIRTHDAY TO FORMER
LSU FOOTBALL PLAYER

ODELL BECKHAM, JR.



11/8

HAPPY 73RD BIRTHDAY TO FORMER
LSU BASKETBALL PLAYER

COLLIS TEMPLE, JR.



11/10

HAPPY 73RD BIRTHDAY TO FORMER
LSU FOOTBALL HEAD COACH

GERRY DINARDO



11/20

HAPPY HEAVENLY BIRTHDAY TO
LONGTIME BATON ROUGE
REPORTER AND COLUMNIST

SMILEY ANDERS



11/27

HAPPY 70TH BIRTHDAY TO FORMER
LSU FOOTBALL PLAYER

AJ DUHE



11/28

HAPPY 33RD BIRTHDAY TO FORMER
LSU FOOTBALL PLAYER

JARVIS LANDRY



COLD, FLU, AND COVID: HOW TO PREPARE THIS SEASON

RUBIN PATEL, MD | PATIENT PLUS URGENT CARE

As the weather changes and people spend more time indoors, we enter the peak season for respiratory illnesses - including the common cold, seasonal flu, and COVID-19. While symptoms can overlap, these viruses are caused by different pathogens and may require different care. The good news? With the right preparation and awareness, you can reduce your risk and feel more confident navigating this season.

Know the Symptoms

While only testing can confirm certain illnesses, being familiar with common signs can help you decide when to seek care.

- **Cold:** Gradual onset, runny/stuffy nose, sneezing, mild sore throat. Fever is rare.
- **Flu:** Sudden onset, high fever, chills, body aches, extreme fatigue, cough, sore throat.
- **COVID-19:** Symptoms vary but may include fever, cough, fatigue, body aches, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, and congestion.

If you have a high fever, shortness of breath, or symptoms that worsen quickly, it's best to be evaluated promptly.

Stock Your At-Home Care Kit

Having supplies ready can make a big difference if illness strikes. Consider keeping:

- Digital thermometer
- Electrolyte drinks for hydration
- Fever reducers/pain relievers
- OTC decongestants
- Tissues and hand sanitizer
- COVID-19 home test kits

Practice Everyday Prevention

While you can't eliminate all risk, these habits lower your chances of catching or spreading illness:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or tissue
- Keep high-touch surfaces clean and disinfected

Get Tested Early

Because flu, COVID-19, and even strep throat can share symptoms, testing is the best way to know for sure what's causing your illness. Early diagnoses can help you start treatment sooner, prevent spreading the illness to others, and give you clear guidance on how long to stay home. Patient Plus Urgent Care offers on-site rapid testing for flu, strep, and COVID-19, so you can get answers fast and get back on the road to recovery.

Know When to Seek Medical Care

If you are experiencing a high fever lasting more than three days, trouble breathing or chest pain, severe sore throat or difficulty swallowing, dehydration, or worsening symptoms after initial improvement, Patient Plus Urgent Care is here to help you get the answers and treatment you need. By staying informed, keeping essential supplies on hand, and knowing where to go for testing and care, you can face the cold, flu, and COVID-19 season with confidence.

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Naz Reid.

Photo by: Minnesota Timberwolves

LSU'S IMPACT ON THE NBA CONTINUES TO GET LESS AND LESS

JUST 6 FORMER TIGERS ON NBA TEAMS ENTERING 2025-26 SEASON,
AND NO DRAFT PICKS SINCE 2022

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

There was not one regular starter in the NBA from LSU last season.

That as much as anything may explain the downfall of the Tigers' program since

former coach Will Wade's asterisk success with consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances in 2019, '21 and '22. That ended with his very deserving firing amid a myriad of NCAA recruiting violations.

No LSU player has been drafted since forward Tari Eason with the 17th pick of the first round by Houston in 2022.

As of this writing, only six former LSU players were on NBA rosters for the 2025-26 season as guard Ben Simmons - one of the least successful first players picked in a first round (2016) in NBA history - was still not generating many tugs on the line in the free agent market.

Simmons, who is a career 13 percent shooter from 3-point range and plays guard, made \$1 million last year for the Los Angeles Clippers in 17 games off the bench. He averaged 2.9 points and 3.1 assists over that span after Brooklyn let him go. In 33 games and 24 starts last season for Brooklyn, he averaged 6.2 points, 6.9 assists and 5.2 rebounds.

He has not averaged double-figure points since the 2020-21 season. And to think, he was compared to LeBron James when he arrived at LSU before the 2015-16 season.

Here is LSU's half dozen NBA players entering the season, which opened on Oct 21:

FORWARD NAZ REID, Minnesota Timberwolves, LSU, 2018-19 – Probably LSU's best product in the NBA, though he started only 17 times of 80 games last season. But his specialty is coming off the bench as he won the 2023-24 Sixth Man of the Year. In the 2024-25 season, he averaged 27.5 minutes a game as a non-starter and scored 14.2 points a game with 6.0 rebounds.

Reid, a native of Asbury Park, New Jersey, recently is living with a tragedy as his older sister Toraya was murdered outside of her apartment in Jackson Township, New Jersey, in September at the age of 28.

GUARD CAM THOMAS, Brooklyn Nets, LSU, 2020-21 – The 27th pick of the first round in 2021, Thomas enters his fifth season with the Nets after signing a one-year, \$6 million contract. He averaged 24 points and 3.8 assists a game and more than 30 minutes a game last season, but in only 25 games and 23 starts. He was lost for the season on March 25 because of a recurring hamstring injury.

FORWARD TARI EASON, Houston Rockets, LSU, 2021-22 – Eason averaged 12.1 points and 6.2 rebounds a game through 16 starts and 56 games last year for Houston.

FORWARD TRENDON WATFORD, Philadelphia 76ers, LSU, 2019-21 – In 44 games and six starts last season at Brooklyn, Watford averaged 10.2 points and 2.6 assists in 44 games. He recently signed a two-year, \$5.3 million contract with Philadelphia.

CENTER DUOP REATH, Portland Trailblazers, LSU, 2016-18 – Reath has done well to make it to the NBA after playing overseas from 2018-23 before catching on in Portland. He averaged 4.2 points and 10.2 minutes in 46 games last season.

GUARD GARRETT TEMPLE, Toronto Raptors, LSU, 2005-09 – The last remnant of LSU's last team to get past the Sweet 16, Temple was key as a freshman in getting LSU to the 2006 Final Four. At 39, he just signed for his 17th season of professional basketball. The Raptors are his 12th NBA team. He averaged 1.9 points and 8.1 minutes in 28 games for Toronto last season. 



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LSU vs. Alabama 2024
Photo by: Michael Bacigalupi



NEW SCHEDULES FOR 2026-29

SEC AWARDS LSU WITH SOFT PERMANENT OPPONENTS, AND STUPIDLY
ENDS BEST ANNUAL LEAGUE GAME THERE IS

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

So, where's all this Alabama bias that the LSU Nation, several LSU media members and James Carville have complained about?

Remember that passionate yet illogical "equitable scheduling" diatribe from former LSU athletic director Joe Alleva. He wanted to end LSU-Florida because Alabama didn't play Florida much. Yet, LSU rarely played Tennessee while Al-

abama did. And over time, Florida and Tennessee are about the same. Lately, Tennessee is much better.

In truth, the "equitable scheduling" argument masked the truth - LSU couldn't beat Bama much. Schedules even out over time.

Now, LSU doesn't have to play Alabama every year, according to the SEC's new nine-league-game format set for 2026-

29. That game is off the annual schedule in 2027 for the first time since 1963. The Tigers' new permanent opponents with alterations possibly in 2030-33 are rising but folding Ole Miss, average to above average Texas A&M and rent-a-win Arkansas.

Ole Miss, A&M and Arkansas have zero SEC championships since 1963 when Ole Miss won one. Texas A&M just

joined the league in 2012 and has never played in the SEC Championship Game. Neither has Ole Miss. Arkansas won the West three times, but went 0-3 in the title game.

“Thank you, SEC” is the billboard LSU fans should pay for display in Birmingham, and apologize for the one put up in 2018 about Devin White, who was correctly ejected for targeting and had to miss Alabama.

I thought the SEC only took care of Alabama? LSU’s three permanent opponents are about the same as Alabama’s - Tennessee, Auburn and Mississippi State.

What’s missing from LSU’s and Alabama’s schedule?

“The big thing that the SEC lost was the LSU-Alabama rivalry,” Sports Illustrated’s Pat Forde wrote. “And that has probably been the best rivalry in college football.”

Funny, the SEC release said, “Annual opponents were determined by traditional rivalries, competitive fairness, geography.”

Alabama and LSU have played annually since 1964. That’s “traditional.” In the last 22 years came nine national championships - LSU (3), Alabama (6) - two No. 1 vs. No. 2 Games of the Century (2011, ’19) and one rematch for the national championship on Jan. 9, 2012.

Sounds like a “rivalry.”

And they just tossed it, so LSU can play Arkansas, and Alabama can play Mississippi State annually? LSU and Alabama will still play every other year, but it’s not the same.

The SEC just limited major TV revenue twice over four years by nixing LSU-Bama - a TV ratings gold mine. The 2011 LSU-Alabama game drew 20 million viewers and an 11.5 rating - the highest viewership for a non-postseason college game since 1989. The 2019 game’s 9.7 and 16.6 million viewers was the highest for a non-postseason game since ... LSU-Bama 2011.

It also is ridiculous that Ole Miss will play Oklahoma every season after two games in HISTORY. How does that fit under “traditional rivalries” and “geography.”

Maybe the SEC needs a Texaco roadmap.

“Oklahoma is really disappointing,” Ole Miss coach Lane Kiffin said. “We don’t

have anything in common with them. That doesn’t make any sense at all.”

LSU-Texas would have made more sense than LSU-Ole Miss, particularly if you’re eliminating LSU-Alabama. LSU-Texas would be much better than LSU-Arkansas, too, and LSU-A&M. LSU-Texas is the new SEC rivalry begging to happen every year. It’s not Ole Miss-Oklahoma.

If the SEC has the money to get rid of a TV money bonanza game like LSU-Ala-

bama every two years, then the SEC can eliminate its championship game, which will continue to grow even more meaningless with expanding playoffs.

That would make sense and cents, because more SEC teams would make the playoffs without the title game, and more playoff teams means more money.

But what makes the most sense and cents is LSU-Bama every year ... forever. **TR**

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Brian Kelly
Photo by: Jonathan Mailhes

CAN THE \$10 MILLION MAN WIN 10 GAMES?

LSU PAID FOR BRIAN KELLY AT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP PRICES, BUT HE CAN'T EVEN SCRATCH THE COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

The LSU football program and \$10 million-a-year coach Brian Kelly are apparently headed for another postseason void of the College Football Playoff, and likely single-digit wins again.

The then-No. 10 Tigers finally played complementary football on Oct. 18 at No. 17 Vanderbilt, which Kelly had been crying for all season. Only not in a good way.

The defense couldn't stop Vanderbilt until it was too late, and the offense couldn't score when it really needed to when it got late. And LSU fell, 31-24, to a former rent-a-win at a

40,000-seat stadium in Nashville, and the Tigers looked like the rental property.

It was the Day the Playoff Music Died for LSU for the sixth straight time since the Tigers' greatest season in history – the 15-0 national championship season that now feels like a deal with the devil. And fourth straight year under Kelly, who came here from Notre Dame and seemingly has LSU under some type of evil Irish hex in a strange reboot of 1993's "Leprechaun" with Jennifer Aniston.

The only difference is ... her career recovered.

LSU fell to 5-2 overall and 2-2 in the Southeastern Conference at Vanderbilt with easily the most difficult part of the schedule yet to come with No. 3 Texas A&M, No. 4 Alabama and No. 13 Oklahoma in the regular season finale on Nov. 29 on the road.

And Arkansas looks like a very losable game as well on Nov. 15 with dual-threat quarterback Taylen Green. Dual quarterbacks have been LSU's horrifying "Soylent Green," and it's not like that's a new entity.

Kelly, who finished 9-4 last season, will not win 10 games again this season, which means he can't even match the digits of his \$10 million salary.

LSU's defense didn't have injured starters Whit Weeks (ankle) at linebacker and Bernard Gooden (collarbone) at tackle, yes, but the Tigers still had no business making Vanderbilt quarterback Diego Pavia look like Johnny Manziel. Pavia is not that good.

The Tigers' defense – once viewed as great this season – allowed 400 yards. Pavia rushed 17 times for 86 yards and two touchdowns, usually on scrambles, including a virtually untouched 21-yard TD jaunt for a 31-21 lead with 27 seconds to go in the third quarter. He also completed 14 of 22 passes for 160 yards.

"We had good enough players in there to win the game," Kelly said.

And therein lies LSU's problem throughout Kelly's overpaid tenure. Some type of problem arises every year – special teams in his first season in 2022, the worst defense in LSU history in 2023, inability to run the ball in 2024 with four offensive linemen who would be drafted, and a gumbo of incompetence on both sides of the ball in 2025.

And Kelly and staff never are able to fix it.

Kelly came into this season with no playoff appearances in three seasons despite his national championship salary. He also got an \$18 million roster with the No. 1 Transfer Portal class.

And before Halloween even hits, LSU looks out of the playoffs and in a third-tier bowl yet again. In his four seasons, Kelly is yet to even sniff playoffs.

"We're disappointed with the loss, don't get me wrong," Kelly said. "And some are saying I'm not getting it done now. I get that. I recognize everybody's angst."

It is a lot more than "some."

And that angst could get Kelly fired and bought out for \$53 million if he finishes 7-5 or even 8-4, which could happen. **TR**

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Former LSU coach **John Brady** took the Tigers to the Final Four in 2006 for the first time since 1986. Photo by: LSU Athletics

• MARCH 25, 2006 •

THE WAIT IS OVER – LSU RETURNS TO FINAL FOUR FOR FIRST TIME SINCE 1986 WITH 70-60 WIN OVER TEXAS

By MATT DEVILLE, Tiger Rag Editor

ATLANTA – Too young. No way. Out of gas. Out of luck. Two days after claiming one of the program's biggest wins ever, the LSU Tigers took it a step further.

The fourth-seeded Tigers' upset of No. 1 Duke ranks as one of LSU's most memorable wins ever. However, coach John Brady's club trumped that slaying by punching a ticket to the Final Four two days later.

Glen Davis and Tyrus Thomas combined for 47 points as LSU defeated No. 2 seed Texas 70-60 in overtime at the Georgia Dome Saturday afternoon in the NCAA Elite Eight. The win sends LSU back to the Final Four for the first time since 1986, when the Tigers became the first 11-seed to make the national semifinals.

"When Dale Brown was coach almost 20 years to the day (March 22), he took an 11 seed and made it to the Final

Four,” Brady said. “And there’s been a lot of similarities with our progression, upsetting a number one as they did 20 years ago. We beat Duke, number two, and we were able to advance on. It means a great deal to our fans and to our state.”

Tied 52-52 at the end of regulation, LSU opened the overtime period going on a 7-0 run. The opening burst included an uncontested 3-pointer at the top of the key by the 6-foot-9, 310-pound forward Glen Davis, who missed an ill-advised trey at the end of regulation.

“It’s called thinking without thinking,” Davis said. “That’s what I call it.”

Texas (30-7) never got within five points of LSU within the final 2:26 of the extra period. The Tigers sank nine free throws in the final 1:18 and began a Mardi Gras Mambo celebration of LSU’s first Final Four in a generation.

“I’ll be honest with you, the celebration was great,” Brady said. “But I knew we were going to win the game.”

Davis seemed to put the game in LSU’s hands, converting a jump shot to give the Tigers a 52-49 lead with just over a minute to play.

The last minute was chaos as Texas attempted three, 3-point shots, nearly turned the ball over twice, and had two shots blocked before a 52-52 tie with 32 seconds left.

Brady called a timeout with 11 ticks left to try and set up the potential game-winning play.

“My goal was to make sure our players didn’t feel in any way that they would lose that game,” he said. “I didn’t want him to feel bad about anything that had gone on.”

The inbound pass went to Davis, who was doubled team but tried an off-balance three. The rebound went to Garrett Temple, who got a wide-open look from the top of the key, but missed, bringing on OT.

“Obviously, LSU is an outstanding team,” Texas coach Rick Barnes said. “They made it really difficult for us to score. LSU deserved to win the game. They made the plays when they had to.”

Tyrus Thomas dominated with 21 points, 13 rebounds and three

blocked shots as he played above the rim more than anyone else, as he did in the win over Duke.

Trailing 9-2, Thomas leapt over two defenders to grab an offensive rebound and flushed it in one motion to light a fire under the Tigers.

“When he tip-dunked the ball back in, it gave us a lift, got our fans involved, and teams feed off that. And it somewhat demoralized Texas,” Brady said.

Three times, Thomas dunked over Texas star center LaMarcus Aldridge.

“That’s something you don’t coach,” Brady said.

But Brady sure can do that, and he’s planning on two more games.

“There’s something in my mind that says we’re not finished yet,” he said.

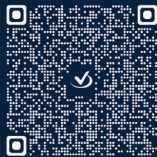
(Editor’s Note: For complete coverage of LSU’s win over Texas in 2006, go to Tigerrag.com.) **TR**



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THE SITDOWN

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Matt McMahon
Photo by: Michael Bacigalupi



MATT MCMAHON

LSU MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH FEELS HE HAS A FIGHTING CHANCE
WITH NEW ROSTER AFTER 2ND LOSING SEASON IN 3 YEARS

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

The numbers around the LSU men's basketball program cannot be ignored.

They are single digit, and they are low:

... 3-15 in the Southeastern Conference last season for 15th in a 16-team league and 14-18 overall.

... 2-16 in the SEC in 2022-23 for 14th and 14-19 overall.

It is year four for coach Matt McMahon, and the expectation is more of the same. The Tigers were picked to finish 15th in the SEC Media Days preseason poll in Birmingham in October.

McMahon, 47, will have three years remaining on a seven-year contract at \$2.8 million a year after this season. With the new revenue sharing, the program did receive more money for roster reconstruction, but LSU is still in the lower third of the league in NIL spending – in single digits for millions of dollars as opposed to \$15 million or more for many SEC teams.

But McMahon does have a better team on paper with the return of junior forward Jalen Reed from a knee injury and the portal additions of top point guard Dedan Thomas Jr., a junior from UNLV, 6-foot-10 junior forward Mike Nwoko of Mississippi State and senior shooting guard PJ Carter of Memphis, to name a few. There is also top high school point guard Jalen Reece of Orlando.

Tiger Rag sat down with McMahon in his office before the season:

QUESTION: Do you feel any extra pressure going into this season?

MCMAHON: I don't. I think every year the landscape of college athletics as a whole, basically for every player and coach, it's a one-year deal. The key to me is I put my focus on what I can control, as cliché as that is. My focus is how do we max out this team? How do we build the best team we can have now? That's how I approach every day. I'm not thinking, 'Oh, man, you've got to win this number of games. You've got to advance this far in the Tournament.' Those are outcomes and results that matter and that are important. But I try to put 100 percent of my focus on getting better every day, improving our team.

QUESTION: What is your overall vision?

MCMAHON: The North Star to me is to get back to the NCAA Tournament, and then to win in the NCAA Tournament.

That's always the North Star of where you're trying to get. So, my focus will always be how do we get there? What are we doing on a daily basis?

QUESTION: Do you listen to the fans or read them on social media?

MCMAHON: I don't. I have incredible appreciation and love for the fans and support that you get here at LSU. It's one of the draws why you want to be here, but as far as criticism and so forth, I don't really tune into all that.

QUESTION: How will your point guards and better size impact you in the SEC?

MCMAHON: I'll be able to go back to what I wanted to be. We'll be able to play with a lot bigger front court. The point guard position is in line with what I'd like to have for playmaking and making people around you better. That's the most important trait of a point guard, and our guys have that. I'm really pleased with the pieces. It'll be a much better fit to how my teams

[cont. next page](#)

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LSU basketball coach **Matt McMahon** feels his new roster will fit better in the elite SEC. Photo by: Michael Bacigalupi

played in the past. (At Murray State, McMahon went 26-6 and 16-2 and 28-5 and 16-2 in 2018 and '19 with guard Ja Morant and reached the NCAA Tournament and 31-3 and 18-0 in 2022 and reached the NCAA Tournament).

QUESTION: Do you think you will be competitive in the SEC – closer to the 2023-24 season when you were 17-16 and 9-9?

MCMAHON: I do. I think our size is more in line with an SEC team certainly. Priority number one was to get an elite point guard. We've checked that box in Dedan Thomas. We wanted to have the size, physicality and athleticism in the front court this league requires to be competitive. We were able to address those priorities

in the portal. Now, it's bringing that to the floor and winning. I want to win. I want LSU back in the NCAA Tournament and winning games. And we've been able to construct a roster that gives us a better opportunity to do so. **TR**



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LSU STARTING OVER ALMOST FROM SCRATCH

COACH MATT MCMAHON ROLLS THE DICE WITH WHAT HE HOPES
IS A LUCKY 7 GROUP OF TRANSFER PORTAL PLAYERS

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

At first glance, it looked like there was a mass exodus from the LSU men's basketball program following a 14-18 season with a 3-15 mark in the Southeastern Conference for second-to-last place.

And that would be understandable. Seven players, including four underclassmen, transferred out, and all landed at major programs.

Freshman guard Vyctorius Miller, nephew of rap music star Percy Miller (aka Master P) landed at Oklahoma State after averaging 8.9 points and 19 minutes a game. That was a loss.

LSU coach Matt McMahon could have found a place for him.

But the other six he does not see that way – junior forward Daimion Collins (8 points, 4.3 rebounds, 1.5 blocks, 20.4 minutes) to South Florida, freshman forward Corey Chest (6.1 points, 6.6 rebounds, 1.2 blocks, 20.1 minutes) to Ole Miss, freshman guard Curtis Givens III (4.8 points, 18.2 minutes) to Memphis, sophomore guard Mike Williams III (4.0 points, 11.2 minutes) to Seton Hall, junior forward Noah Boyde (1.4 points, 2.4 minutes) to Western Kentucky and junior guard Tyrell Ward (red-shirted) to Virginia Commonwealth.

They either wanted too much Name, Image & Likeness money to come back, or McMahon and his staff were not interested enough to pay more and offered the same or less.

McMahon says he did not try to bring any of them back out of the portal before other teams signed them. He wanted the new seven he has, and/or needed the extra money to get four potential game changers.

The top addition and No. 1 NIL earner is 6-foot-1 junior point guard Dedan Thomas Jr. of UNLV. McMahon got him away from national champion Florida, ultimate blue blood Kentucky and Syracuse. He was the No. 6 point guard in the portal and No. 15 overall prospect.

McMahon, who had significantly more portal money to spend via the new revenue sharing and an improved financial commitment from LSU sources, also added No. 14 power

forward Marquel Sutton of Omaha at 6-8, No. 17 center Mike Nwoko of Mississippi State at 6-10, and No. 23 shooting guard Rashad King of Northeastern at 6-6.

He brought Thomas and Sutton to the Southeastern Conference Media Days along with returning 6-10 junior power forward Jalen Reed, one of only two returning players from last year's team.

Thomas averaged 15.6 points and 4.6 assists last season while shooting 35 percent from three-point range.

"Has really been a breath of fresh air," McMahon said. "Great basketball mind. Processes the game at a high level. Has a great court vision and ability to make people around him better, which is the most important trait of an elite point guard."

Sutton averaged 18.9 points and 7.9 rebounds last season and was the Summitt League player of the year.

"Versatile defender who can guard one through five," McMahon said. His energy is contagious."

Reed was averaging 11.1 points and 6.5 rebounds a game before injuring his knee in game eight and was lost for the season.

"I think Jalen will be one of the great stories in college basketball this season," McMahon said. "Got off to a great start last year. I think he'll have a monster year for us."

Nwoko will add much needed strength inside, though his numbers need to improve from 6.1 points and 4.6 rebounds last season. King scored

18.1 points with 6.5 rebounds a game a year ago.

"Love the construction of our roster," McMahon said. "Obviously, this is the best league in college basketball and the most physical. We wanted to address that in our front court. We were able to with Jalen Reed coming back and Marquel and Mike Nwoko."

LSU's only other returning player – 6-10 forward Robert Miller III – could also be a force inside. He averaged only 4.5 points and 3.1 rebounds last season, but came on late. He scored 19 points with 10 rebounds against national champion Florida and 15 with six boards at Kentucky.

"His length and athleticism and versatility will be huge," McMahon said. "He's a unicorn-type player with a 75-inch wingspan. One of those guys who can be as good as he wants to be."

McMahon needs to be much better in this his fourth season himself, or LSU athletic director Scott Woodward may be in the NCAA Coaching Transfer Portal. Something like McMahon's 17-16 and 9-9 finish in 2023-24 would be a step in the right direction.

"It's a new season for us," he said when asked why he is still around after last season. "Clearly, we didn't capitalize on the season we had two years ago. As I look to the future, there's great excitement in the roster we've built. There is great chemistry and energy." **TR**



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Dedan Thomas, Jr.
Photo by: University of Nevada Las Vegas Athletics



A TRUE POINT GUARD AND A SOLID BET FOR THE TIGERS

TRANSFER DEDAN THOMAS JR. OF UNLV IS WORKING
ON BEING SELFISH AND SHOOTING MORE

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

UNLV transfer point guard Dedan Thomas Jr. is the star of LSU coach Matt McMahon's portal class.

He will be the quarterback, but the goal is for him to pass less than Garrett Nussmeier.

"I love him. He's an elite floor general," McMahon said. "Relentless worker. I've been really impressed. Probably the biggest surprise is he has

been very impactful on defense with his ability to disrupt and pressure. Great court vision, willing passer.”

Stop right there.

Maybe too willing.

“Unselfish to a fault at times,” McMahon said.

Thomas (6-foot-1, 178 pounds) averaged 4.6 assists last season for UNLV with 15.6 points a game. As a freshman, he scored 13.6 a game with 5.1 assists.

The son of former UNLV guard Dedan Thomas (1991-94), D.J. shot 36 percent from 3-point range as a freshman (34 of 94) and 35 percent last year (24 of 68).

McMahon took a closer look at that.

“He has been a 40 percent guy on catch-and-shoot threes,” he said. “We are counting on him to score and facilitate.”

Whether he likes it or not.

“Coach is really encouraging me to stay aggressive and take my open shots,” Thomas said. “I tended to turn down lots of open shots the past two years. I’m not looking for stats. He’s encouraging me to take a lot more threes. I just feel like whatever is needed in that game. I’m looking for whatever I can do to help my team win. We have different scoring options on this team. We have a lot of weapons.”

But if McMahon says shoot, Thomas will, because he finds himself watching previous McMahon guards on television.

Thomas likes where McMahon has come from. He played shooting guard at Appalachian State and coached elite guards while Murray State’s head coach and an assistant – Ja Morant, Cameon Payne and Isaiah Caanan. Morant and

Payne are both in the NBA and were first round picks – Morant second overall by Memphis in 2019 and Payne 14th in 2015 by Oklahoma City. Caanan was a second round pick in 2013 by Houston.

“I know his history with guards he had at Murray State,” Thomas said. “I’m very aware of his track record – Ja Morant, Cameron Payne. So, I felt like I could learn a lot with him.”

**“HE HAS BEEN A 40 PERCENT GUY
ON CATCH-AND-SHOOT THREES, WE ARE
COUNTING ON HIM TO SCORE
AND FACILITATE.”**

- MATT MCMAHON

It didn’t hurt that McMahon and assistant David Patrick had Thomas on speed dial either.

“As soon as I hit the portal, coach McMahon was calling me every day,” Thomas said. “David Patrick was calling me every day. Coach JC (Jalen Courtney-Williams) was calling pretty much every other day.”

It did not get aggravating.

“No, not at all,” he said. “I just felt how much they believed in me. Coach Mac every day, telling me how much he believed in me and what I could be if I came here.”

The calls began within a day or two of Thomas entering the portal.

“They were definitely after me, so I could just tell how much they really wanted me here,” he said. “So, I felt the love.”

And it was not the first time. McMahon recruited Thomas out of Liberty High in Las Vegas along with Alabama and Florida. But he wanted to stay close to home and play where his dad did. He also liked then-coach Lon Kruger, who was not retained by UNLV after last season.

“It was the right situation. Coach Kruger really wanted me to be his point guard,” he said. “He said I was going to come in and get thrown right in the fire. I’m always up to the challenge. It was a benefit to me.”

McMahon has the same plan for Thomas, and the fires of the SEC will be hotter than those of the Mountain West. The SEC produced the national champion last season in Florida and a record 14 teams in the NCAA Tournament in a banner year.

“I mean it’s the best conference in America,” Thomas said. “So, I’ve always wanted to play against the best. I really did want to come to the SEC. It’s the closest thing to the NBA. Can’t wait to play in the big games. Look on your SEC schedule, it’s big game after big game. I feel like every game is going to bring the best out of you.”

Thomas started bringing out the best of his new teammates immediately.

“Quiet but instant credibility and respect from his teammates because of his work ethic and unselfishness and competitive spirit,” McMahon said. “Really enjoying the opportunity to coach him. He wants to be coached. He wants to get better. He’s a quick learner. Having a lot of fun getting to work with him.” **TR**



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FORMER ISRAEL PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYER RON ZIPPER IS LIVING HIS AMERICAN DREAM AT LSU

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

LSU freshman guard Ron Zipper grew up in Ashkelon, Israel – just 10 miles from the Gaza Strip on the Mediterranean Sea.

His family and neighbors have safe rooms in their homes. He spoke about it as routinely as someone in Baton Rouge may discuss a back patio.

“Yeah, every house has a safe room,” Zipper said in an interview with Tiger Rag last month. “It was not that safe there a few weeks before I left last June. Every day and every night, there were alarms, and you’re going to a safe room, and you just pray.”

Zipper said that on Oct. 10. Two days before, Israel and Hamas – the Islamic Resistance Movement terrorist organization – agreed to pause fighting in Gaza and release hostages and prisoners via an agreement pushed by President Donald Trump and his administration.

Zipper was with his parents Gil and Zehava and younger brother Adam and sister Shira after Israel attacked Hamas ally Iran on June 13 after decades of Cold War.

“We started the war with Iran on June 13,” Zipper said. “They sent rockets, and we sent rockets. It was not safe. We’d go in the safe room, just pray.”

Zipper had a flight scheduled for June 23 to the United States and to Baton Rouge after signing with LSU in early May, but the airport near his home shut down because of the fighting.

“I didn’t know what to do,” he said. “I thought about maybe taking a boat to Cyprus (an island nation in the Mediterranean 250 miles from Ashkelon). And then get to the U.S. But it was crazy. It was like 24 hours on the ship, and you’re getting dizzy. I didn’t want to take a risk. So, I just waited.”

The Israel-Iran conflict ended on June 25, and the Israel-Hamas ceasefire had continued as of this writing after that war began in 2023.

“WE’D GO TO THE SAFEROOM AND JUST PRAY.”

- LSU FRESHMAN RON ZIPPER ON SURVIVING
THE ISRAEL-IRAN CONFLICT LAST JUNE IN HIS
HOMETOWN OF ASHKELON, ISRAEL, NEAR
THE GAZA STRIP.

“A couple days after that break in the war, I flew here at the end of June,” Zipper said. “Now, it’s safe. My family is safe. Israel and Hamas stopping the war made a very happy day in Israel.”

And Zipper has been enjoying the LSU-American life while practicing and getting ready for the 2025-26 season.

“After three months, I miss home sometimes,” he said. “But I think I’m in the right place. I’m getting better, improving and getting comfortable. Happy that I’m here.”

He has eaten crawfish and alligator at the Performance Nutrition Center (PNC) in the football facility. He has eaten seafood at Phil’s Oyster Bar.

“Never had anything like crawfish and alligator,” Zipper said. “That’s crazy. I tried it. It’s fine. But I miss the food in Israel – humus and shawarma. You have it here, but not as good. But there is good food here.”

He also went to his first American football game - Louisiana Tech at LSU on Sept. 6 in Tiger Stadium.

“I didn’t realize how big it is here,” he said. “It’s amazing – the weekends, the tailgate. It’s giving me an experience. I have a lot of fun.”

A Business major, Zipper is enjoying classes and the campus as opposed to pro basketball, where he played for Hapoel Be’er Sheva near his hometown in one of the top pro leagues.

“I like it. I’m doing stuff all day,” he said. “In Israel, you just go to practice, go to the apartment, the game, and it’s very boring. Here, you’re going to the PNC, school, working out. It’s more productive.”

The facilities blew him away.

“I was like, ‘Wow, this place is amazing,’” he said. “I never had facilities like this, and the kind of professional coaches. All this is very special.”

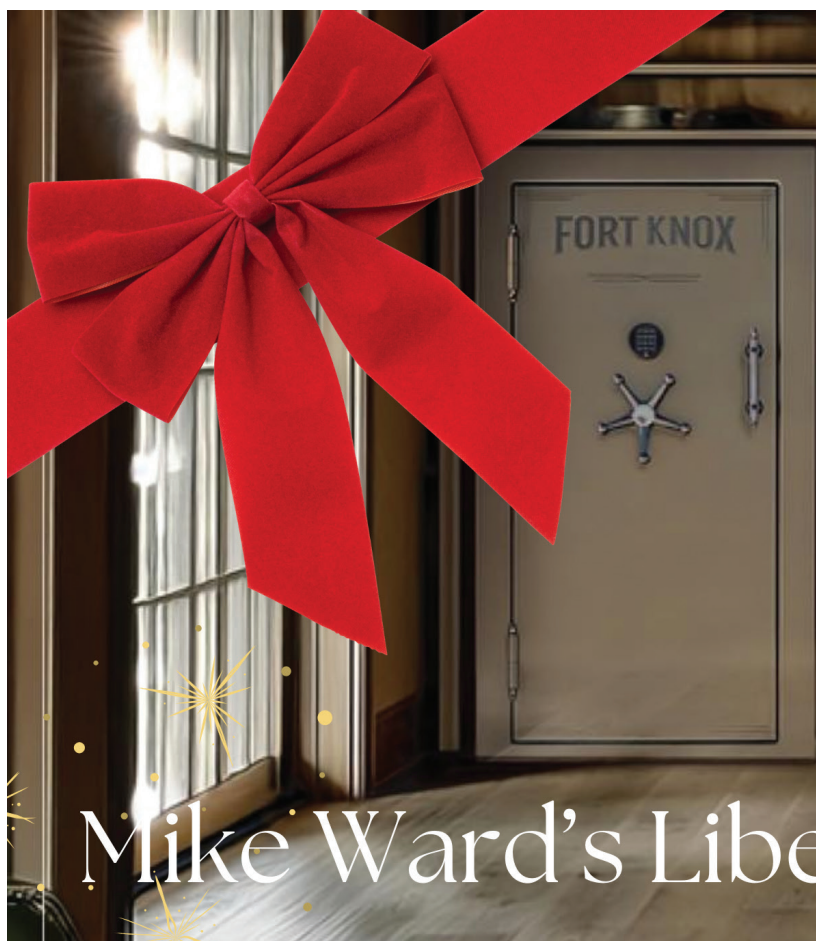
He is also enjoying playing against athletes his own age, which is 22. In his Israel pro league, he went against players in their late 20s and early 30s.

Still, the left-hander averaged 11.1 points a game last season and shot 36 percent from three-point range. He shot 39 percent beyond the arc his last two seasons.

“It’s a transition. His first day on campus was his first day in the United States of America,” LSU coach Matt McMahon said. “He can really shoot it from three and has good size (6-5, 209) as a wing. That’s an area we need, and he definitely provides that.”

Right now, Zipper is just living the dream.

“I wanted something else,” he said. “I like America. I wanted to get better as a player, get far from my family for now, be alone, be more on my own, and take care of myself. That’s the first thing I wanted to do here. It’s been great.” **TR**



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Marquel Sutton
Photo by: University of
Nebraska Omaha Athletics



Marquel Sutton. Photo by: University of Nebraska Omaha Athletics

NEW BASKETBALL BLOOD

LSU MEN HAVE NO. 16 TRANSFER PORTAL CLASS AFTER NO. 67 RANKING LAST YEAR
AND NO. 23 RECRUITING CLASS - WILL THEY GET TIGERS OUT OF SEC CELLAR?

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

The 2024-25 LSU men's basketball team was so thin inside that it never recovered from the loss of its only consis-

tently physical inside player last season – 6-foot-10, 245-pound Jalen Reed.

“We’ve built a much better roster in the front court, at point guard and with tall wings to get to where we want to go,”

LSU coach Matt McMahon said. "Our size is more in line with the SEC."

McMahon signed the No. 16 Transfer Portal class in the nation with seven players (three forwards, four guards). Last year, he signed the No. 67 portal class with three guards.

Of the seven, four are four-star prospects – No. 6 point guard Dedan Thomas Jr. (profiled on pages 28-29), who is the No. 15 portal prospect from UNLV as a junior, No. 14 power forward Marquel Sutton of Omaha (senior), No. 17 center Mike Nwoko of Mississippi State (junior) and No. 23 shooting guard Rashad King of Northeastern (senior).

The biggest addition is Nwoko (6-10, 260) from Mississippi State who is the No. 129 overall portal prospect. He started 31 games last season, but averaged just 6.1 points and 4.6 rebounds. He did score in double figures seven times.

"He'll be a main contributor," McMahon said. "He's every bit of 260 pounds, and 259 of it is all muscle. Really physical, athletic. Can score with either hand around the goal. He'll provide much needed size and physicality."

Sutton (6-8, 230) averaged 18.9 points, 7.9 rebounds for Omaha last season and was the Summit League player of the year. He is the No. 79 overall portal prospect.

"Incredible motor," McMahon said. "One of our fastest players. Really scores it around the goal, chases rebounds."

King (6-6, 215) is a big shooting guard who averaged 18.5 points with 6.1 rebounds a game last season and is the No. 98 portal prospect. He hit just 31 percent from three-point range last season (44 of 138).

"But he was 38 percent on catch-and-shoot threes," McMahon said. "The majority of the threes we'll take will be catch and shoot."

Max Mackinnon (6-6, 195) is another big shooting guard senior who averaged 14.5 points and 4.8 rebounds at Portland and hit 40 percent from 3-point range (37 of 91).

Senior shooting guard P.J. Carter (6-4, 183) averaged just 5.4 points and 14.5 minutes a game for Memphis, but he was instant offense from three-point range at 39 percent (46 of 117).

"He made 98 threes at 40 percent the last two seasons," McMahon said.

Senior Pablo Tambia (6-7, 206) is an unranked small forward who averaged 11.3 points and 5.3 rebounds last year at UC-Davis.

McMahon signed two guards in his 2025-26 high school class in No. 11 point guard Jalen Reece (6-0, 185) of Oak Ridge High in Orlando and No. 13 shooting guard Mazi Mosley (6-5, 169) of Prolific Prep in Los Angeles.

"Jalen is excellent at play making," McMahon said. "He's key for us. Mosley is really talented, but has to get stronger. Has a beautiful stroke from three."

Also from the high school class is No. 15 power forward Matt Gilhool (6-11, 213) of William Penn High in Philadelphia and shooting guard Ron Zipper (6-4, 209), a former pro basketball player in Israel (profiled on pages 30-31). **TR**



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Jalen Reed
Photo by: LSU Athletics

A full-page photograph of Jalen Reed, a basketball player for LSU, in action. He is wearing a purple jersey with yellow trim and the letters "LSU" in yellow. He is holding a basketball with both hands and looking intently to his left. He has a large, detailed tattoo on his left arm featuring a basketball, wings, and the name "Justin". The background is a blurred basketball court.

THE HEART AND SOUL IS BACK

WHEN LSU'S JALEN REED WENT DOWN WITH A KNEE INJURY
LAST DECEMBER, THE SEASON BASICALLY ENDED

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

LSU basketball coach Matt McMahon didn't see his life pass before his eyes, but he sure saw the season do that on Dec. 3, 2024.

In the opening minutes of the Tigers' 85-75 win over Florida State in the Pete Maravich Assembly Center, his best player – 6-foot-10 junior forward Jalen Reed – went down with a knee injury.

It was found that Reed tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee that required major surgery, and he was lost for the season after averaging 12.4 points, 7.4 rebounds and 1.1 blocks through eight games.

The Tigers were 7-1 after that game, including a 109-102 win over Central Florida in triple overtime in which Reed scored 21 points with 13 rebounds.

"Obviously, when Jalen went down, we did not have the size and physicality in the front court to sustain what we were doing," McMahon said before the 2025-26 season. "I knew that was going to present some problems. I was correct. We were thin."

Reed's beefy inside presence at 240 pounds could not be replaced, and LSU finished 14-18 overall with a 3-15 mark in the Southeastern Conference for second to last place.

Well, Reed is back after surgery and a difficult rehabilitation and is expected to play early this season in December.

"It's been inspiring to watch his return," McMahon said. "As you saw last year, he was off to a great start."

McMahon and his Tigers missed Reed on and off the court.

"Leader of the team playing at 6-10 and 250 pounds," McMahon said. "He is just so

skilled, his ability to score around the basket, so skilled off the perimeter for a player at his size. Really unique in that ability to live in the paint, create advantages, create scoring opportunities – not only for himself, but to create better catch-and-shoot plays for our other players. And obviously his presence on the glass. He was rebounding the ball at a very high level last year prior to the injury."

Other programs have shown interest in Reed via the portal and NIL.

"I just have tremendous respect for him and his loyalty to LSU," McMahon said. "He wants to be here to help us build something."

McMahon feels Reed will return by December.

"He's just worked incredibly hard every single day, since he got out of surgery," he said. "We're not going to rush it. We will not play him until he's 100 percent. I could see there being some minor restrictions, depending how quickly he gets to full clearance. But expect him way before January."

Reed has circled an earlier date than December. How about Wednesday, Nov. 5, and the season opener at home against Tarleton State.

"If we tipped up tomorrow, I feel like I'd be ready to go," Reed said in mid-October. "I feel pretty normal when I'm out there practicing. I'll be ready for the season opener – for sure."

They say one has to walk before one can run. Well, Reed couldn't walk for three months after the surgery last December.

"Just on a wheelchair or crutches everywhere, or having someone take me

somewhere," he said. "And then going into the training room for ice and little subtle exercises, like raising my leg and stuff. Basically, starting over from zero and learning how to walk."

Merely going to LSU's games was a chore as he faced the first serious injury of his life.

"Yes, it was really difficult, especially because I wanted to be out there so bad," he said. "It was difficult to get there, because I couldn't walk. Just getting on the team plane was a hassle sometimes. Getting to the court on my crutches or getting somebody to roll me out there was difficult."

Reed, an original McMahon signee as the No. 10 forward in the country from Southern Cal Academy in 2022, said he was 95 percent healthy as the season approached. But mentally stronger.

"It put some character on me for sure, going through that physically," he said. "Major surgery, then trying to recover from that. But the toughest part was the mental – just being away from the game."

McMahon has not noticed any apprehension from Reed toward possibly reinjuring the knee, which plagues some players.

"He has shown zero fear, zero hesitancy on the court," he said. "He's checked the box every step of the way in his process, and he's way ahead of schedule."

Reed simply can't wait.

"I love basketball so much," he said. "That's my happy place, so having that stripped from me, it was much rougher on me mentally."

It was pretty rough on LSU, too. **TR**

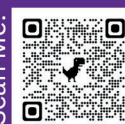


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John Brady. Tiger Rag File Photo

JOHN BRADY 'HUMBLED BEYOND MEASURE' TO REACH DUAL DESTINATIONS OF DISTINCTION

FINAL FOUR LSU BASKETBALL COACH HEADED
TO LSU AND LOUISIANA HALLS OF FAME

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

At times during former men's basketball coach John Brady career at LSU, a trip to a Hall of Fame in

Louisiana seemed only possible as a tourist destination.

But he was just inducted into the LSU Athletics Hall of Fame on Sept. 19 at the Manship Theatre in Baton

Rouge along with LSU forward Ronald Dupree, who played for Brady, women's basketball three-point ace Cornelia Gayden and point guard Temeka Johnson, twice national champion men's golf coach J. Perry Cole, and twice vault national champion gymnast Rheagan Courville Branton.

Brady will also be inducted into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame in Natchitoches next summer with LSU/WNBA center Sylvia Fowles, LSU/NFL center Todd McClure and LSU baseball's Warren "Home Run" Morris, who will receive the Louisiana Sports Ambassador Award.

Already an SEC Legend honoree in 2018, Brady, 71, was at a loss for words with each Louisiana honor.

"You guys sure know how to make an old coach cry," Brady told Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame chairman Doug Ireland when he got The Call in August. "Besides Stromile Swift committing (in 1998), that was the best call I ever got. Humbled beyond measure."

Brady has known the dream-like heights and agony of coaching as well as battles with fans and media here and there while at LSU.

Four times while LSU's coach from 1997-98 through 2007-08, Brady had losing seasons overall with single-digit losing SEC campaigns. Though he did inherit a program from coach Dale Brown that had suffered four straight overall losing seasons and four in a row in the SEC with single-digit wins himself and with NCAA sanctions on the way.

But after a 9-18 and 2-14 and 12-15 and 4-12 seasons in his first two years, Brady exploded with Swift of Shreveport to an SEC title at 12-4 and the NCAA Tournament Sweet 16 with a 28-6 finish. A losing season followed in 2000-01, however, amid NCAA sanctions and significant scholarship reductions.

But consistency followed as the sanctions ran their course, and Brady's Tigers reached two NCAA Tournaments in three years before exploding again for another SEC title and first Final Four in 20 years in 2005-06 at 27-9 and 14-2.

Alas, Brady fell to 17-15 and 5-11 in 2006-07 and was let go amid a poor start in 2007-08 without injured star forward Tasmin Mitchell. Yet, when new LSU coach Trent Johnson won the 2008-09 SEC title with Mitchell and other Brady players, he gave Brady a championship ring.

Brady, who retired from coaching at Arkansas State in 2016, also treasures the SEC championship ring coach Will Wade gave him after he won the league in 2019 as Brady has been the LSU Radio Network's analyst since 2017 – a position he treasures.

"This LSU Athletics Hall of Fame and Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, I don't know if that would have ever happened, if I wouldn't have come back and done radio," Brady told Tiger Rag. "It helped my legacy here by people seeing me maybe in a different light."

Brady will be back at the microphone with LSU this season.

"It's helped me get to this place where I am with LSU people now, which I'm blown away by," Brady said. "I'm just so humbled by it." **TR**



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0
G

MAZI MOSLEY
FR | 6-5 | 169
LOS ANGELES, CA
PROLIFIC PREP



1
F

MIKE NWOKO
JR | 6-10 | 261
TORONTO, CAN
PROLIFIC PREP | MISSISSIPPI STATE



2
G

JALEN REECE
FR | 6-0 | 185
ORLANDO, FL
OAK RIDGE HS



3
G

MAX MACKINNON
SR | 6-6 | 195
BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA
UNIV. OF CANBERRA | PORTLAND



4
G

RASHAD KING
SR | 6-6 | 217
EVANS, GA
EVANS HS | NORTHEASTERN



6
F

ROBERT MILLER, III
SO | 6-10 | 230
HOUSTON, TX
PASADENA MEMORIAL HS



7
G

PJ CARTER
5TH SR | 6-4 | 183
ATLANTA, GA
LANGSTON HUGHES HS | MEMPHIS



8
F

PABLO TAMBA
GRAD | 6-7 | 206
MALAGA, SPAIN
I.E.S. LITORAL | UC DAVIS



9
F

JALEN REED
RS JR | 6-10 | 245
JACKSON, MS
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ACADEMY



10
F

MARQUEL SUTTON
5TH SR | 6-9 | 225
TULSA, OK
WILL ROGERS HS | OMAHA



11
G

DEDAN THOMAS, JR.
JR | 6-1 | 178
LAS VEGAS, NV
LIBERTY HS | UNLV



13
F

MATT GILHOOL
FR | 6-11 | 213
ELIZABETHTOWN, PA
WILLIAM PENN CHARTER



14
G

JADEN BOBBETT
5TH SR | 6-1 | 190
RYE, NH
CUSHING ACADEMY | INDIANA



16
G

RON ZIPPER
FR | 6-5 | 209
ASHKELON, ISRAEL
IRONI ALEPH HS

Sun. Oct 26	AT UCF (EXH)	Orlando, Fla.	11:00 AM, ESPN+
Wed. Nov 5	VS. TARLETON STATE	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Mon. Nov 10	VS. NEW ORLEANS	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Thu. Nov 13	VS. FLORIDA INT'L	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Tue. Nov 18	VS. ALCORN STATE	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Fri. Nov 21	VS. OMAHA	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Fri. Nov 28	VS. DRAKE	Niceville, Fla.	8:30PM, CBSSN
Sat. Nov 29	VS. GEORGIATECH OR DEPAUL	Niceville, Fla.	TBA, CBSSN
Wed. Dec 3	AT BOSTON COLLEGE	Chestnut Hill, Mass.	6:00PM, ACCN
Sun. Dec 7	VS. TEXAS TECH	Fort Worth, Texas	TBA, ESPN2
Sat. Dec 13	VS. SMU	New Orleans, La.	7:30PM, SECN
Fri. Dec 19	VS. SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Mon. Dec 22	VS. PRAIRIE VIEW	Baton Rouge, La.	6:00PM, SECN
Mon. Dec 29	VS. SOUTHERN MISS	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Sat. Jan 3	AT TEXAS A&M	Bryan-College Station, Texas	3:00PM, ESPNU
Jan 6 - Jan 7	VS. SOUTH CAROLINA	Baton Rouge, La.	6:00PM, ESPNU
Sat. Jan 10	AT VANDERBILT	Nashville, Tenn.	12:00PM, SECN
Jan 13 - Jan 14	VS. KENTUCKY	Baton Rouge, La.	6:00PM, SECN
Sat. Jan 17	VS. MISSOURI	Baton Rouge, La.	2:30PM, SECN
Jan 20 - Jan 21	AT FLORIDA	Gainesville, Fla.	6:00PM, ESPN2
Sat. Jan 24	AT ARKANSAS	Fayetteville, Ark.	7:30PM, SECN
Jan 27 - Jan 28	VS. MISSISSIPPI STATE	Baton Rouge, La.	6:00PM, SECN
Sat. Jan 31	AT SOUTH CAROLINA	Columbia, S.C.	5:00PM, SECN
Sat. Feb 7	VS. GEORGIA	Baton Rouge, La.	5:00PM, SECN
Feb 10 - Feb 11	VS. ARKANSAS	Baton Rouge, La.	8:00PM, SECN
Sat. Feb 14	AT TENNESSEE	Knoxville, Tenn.	5:00PM, SECN
Feb 17 - Feb 18	AT TEXAS	Austin, Texas	8:00PM, SECN
Sat. Feb 21	VS. ALABAMA	Baton Rouge, La.	5:00PM, SECN
Feb 24 - Feb 25	AT OLE MISS	Oxford, Miss.	8:00PM, SECN
Sat. Feb 28	VS. OKLAHOMA	Baton Rouge, La.	5:00PM, SECN
Mar 3 - Mar 4	AT AUBURN	Auburn, Ala.	9:00PM, SECN
Sat. Mar 7	VS. TEXAS A&M	Baton Rouge, La.	5:00PM, SECN
Mar 11 - Mar 15	SECTOURNAMENT	Nashville, Tenn.	TBA, SECN
Mar 17 - Apr 6	NCAA TOURNAMENT	TBD	TBA



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Kim Mulkey
Photo by: Michael Bacigalupi

FIFTH FOR MULKEY?

KIM MULKEY'S 5TH SEASON OFFERS NATIONAL TITLE HOPES AGAIN

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Writer

LSU coach Kim Mulkey's 2025-26 women's basketball squad looks much different than just a year ago. Out of the 13 on the roster, eight are new with five freshmen and three transfers.

The Tigers only have two returning starters, but Mulkey is fully embracing the challenge of building a new team with so many new faces.

"I don't view that any other way than go to work," Mulkey said as practice opened last month. "Let's go to work. This is what you get paid to do, and let's see how good we can become. Those kids came in here with quite a reputation, but this is a different level. And let's see how good we can become."

LSU's five freshmen are Divine Bourrage, Grace Knox, Bella Hines, ZaKiyah Johnson and Meghan Yarnevich. Mulkey's portal adds are MiLaysia Fulwiley, Kate Koval and Amiya Joyner.

"The one thing I can tell you is I like their disposition," Mulkey said. "They're all excited, and they're all happy. They're all just really focused on basketball, and I enjoy that."

The Tigers added the No.1 transfer in the nation in Fulwiley, a junior guard. In her two seasons with South Carolina, she averaged 11.7 points per game on 43.2 percent shooting, 2.9 rebounds, 2.1 assists, 1.6 steals and 0.8 blocks.

Mulkey is trying to get Fulwiley adapted to playing point guard as opposed to her regular wing position.

"I know how hard it is, but if we can get her to a level of being comfortable there, then all the wonderful improvising that she does, it's still going to be there," Mulkey said at SEC Media Days

in Birmingham. "So, you're trying to add to her game. I can move Mikaylah to the point, but I would love to see MiLaysia really do some things with the ball in her hands at the point."

"THE ONE THING I CAN TELL YOU IS I LIKE THEIR DISPOSITION. THEY'RE ALL EXCITED, AND THEY'RE ALL HAPPY. THEY'RE ALL JUST REALLY FOCUSED ON BASKETBALL, AND I ENJOY THAT."

- COACH KIM MULKEY

Much like Flau'Jae Johnson, Fulwiley's energy is hard to ignore.

"She's been a joy to coach. I've never seen a kid smile so much. She's just happy," Mulkey said.

The Tigers return some of the best guards in the SEC in Johnson, a senior, and Williams, a junior.

Johnson is coming off a strong season after being an integral part to the Tigers' third-straight Elite Eight appearance. She averaged 18.6 points, 5.5 rebounds and 2.5 assists per game and was named to the pre-season first team All-SEC unit.

Williams averaged 17.2 points, 4.4 rebounds and 3.3 assists last season. She had 11 games with at least 20 points and two with 30 or more. Williams was named to the pre-season second team All-SEC squad.

LSU is having to replace all its post players. Jersey Wolfenbarger, Sa'Myah Smith and

Aalyah Del Rosario transferred, while and Aneesah Morrow is in the WNBA.

Morrow will be a major loss for the Tigers, but Mulkey believes her team can make up for her production as a unit.

"I don't know right now if we're capable of having a player that can go do that by herself, so let's do it collectively," she said. "We have five players that have never put on an LSU uniform, and it's fun to watch them battle every day. But when the lights come on, and we start playing games, it'll be real interesting to see who goes and gets those rebounds."

The Tigers added 6-foot-5 sophomore Kate Koval from Notre Dame and 6-2 senior Amiya Joyner from East Carolina to the inside.

"If you look at Kate and you look at Amiya, we have some size down there," Mulkey said. "So, we've got a mixture of big. We've got a mixture of size. We've got a mixture of athleticism. It'll be fun to watch them develop."

Koval gives LSU its best size down low since 6-4 La'Dashia Williams played for the Tigers in the 2022-23 season. Koval played her freshman season at Notre Dame, averaging 5.3 points, 4.7 rebounds, 1.3 assists and 1.7 blocks a game. She was named to the All-ACC freshmen first team.

Joyner can play power forward and center. Through her three seasons with East Carolina, she averaged 12.8 points, 9.6 rebounds, 1.9 assists, 1.2 steals and 1.4 blocks per game while shooting over 45% from the field.

"I really think we got a steal in the portal with her," Mulkey said. "And I'm really impressed with the things that she can do physically." **TR**



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Flau'Jae Johnson
Photo by: Jonathan Mailhes



STUCK ON LSU

LSU SUPERSTAR GUARD FLAU'JAE JOHNSON LOOKS TO CEMENT
HER LEGACY AT LSU IN HER SENIOR SEASON

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Writer

Despite speculation of entering the NCAA Transfer Portal last April, LSU senior guard Flau'Jae Johnson chose to stay at LSU for a fourth season under coach Kim Mulkey.

"LSU means a lot to me," she said. "I like to say, 'I'm loyal to the soil.' And these are my people down here, and it just kind of didn't make sense for me to leave. So, I just feel like I needed

one more year to submit by LSU legacy and hopefully do something big here."

Johnson, the 5-foot-10 native of Savannah, Georgia, is coming off her best

season as she averaged 18.6 points, 5.6 rebounds, 2.5 assists, 1.7 steals and 0.9 blocks per game during 2024-25.

She was named to the first team All-SEC squad and was an Associated Press and U.S. Basketball Writer's Association third team All-American selection. In addition, she was named to the 2025-26 pre-season All-SEC first team.

But none of those things matter to her. And she's not worried about the past, choosing to focus more on the present and the future. Her personal goals for the 2025-26 season? Bring a national title back to Baton Rouge and build her WNBA Draft stock.

"That's it really. And playing well enough to possibly be the number one pick in the draft," Johnson said. "I'm top five right now, and so I need to just continue to work hard and show that I'm better than everybody else."

Johnson is the longest tenured player on this year's team. As a freshman, she helped the Tigers claim their first national championship in program history in the 2022-23 season. Now, Johnson is looking to lead a team full of new faces back to the promised land.

"I feel like it's just showing up every day and being accountable," Johnson said.

Mulkey is expecting another significant season from Johnson.

"Put it all together and just be grown," she said. "Don't have any melting moments. Don't let bad play affect you. This is it. There is no double senior year. This is your senior year, and go

out there and enjoy yourself through all the tough times. And don't beat yourself up. Be a good leader. Go out in a blaze of glory, girl."

**"[MULKEY] STILL GETS ON MY NERVES,
AND I GET ON HER NERVES. BUT AT
THE END OF THE DAY, IT'S LIKE A REAL
GENUINE LOVE. IT'S GOING TO BE SAD
- THESE LAST GAMES OF THIS SEASON.
BUT IT HAS BEEN A RIDE. I'M HAPPY I
GOT TO DO IT WITH HER. I WOULDN'T
TRADE IT FOR THE WORLD."**

- FLAU'JAE JOHNSON

Johnson has been with Mulkey through the ups and downs since the beginning. Johnson was one of the first players that Mulkey recruited out of high school at LSU, as she was the first McDonalds All-American that the Tigers signed in five years. She appreciates her relationship with her coach and is looking forward to finishing her career in the Purple and Gold.

"I mean when you've been with somebody almost every day for four years, you grow a bond and, you know, I just learned her," Johnson said of Mulkey. "She still gets on my nerves, and I get

on her nerves. But at the end of the day, it's like a real genuine love. It's going to be sad - these last games of this season. But it has been a ride. I'm happy I got to do it with her. I wouldn't trade it for the world."

And the feeling is mutual with Mulkey.

"I will always have a special place in my heart for her because she could have chosen some better basketball schools at that time, and she chose to come here and get LSU back on track," she said.

Johnson is looking to build off of an elite junior season, playing in one of the most talented back courts in the country that features herself, junior Mikaylah Williams and South Carolina junior transfer MiLaysia Fulwiley.

"She lights a lot of firepower in transition," Johnson said of Fulwiley. "And we can all score. There won't be any drop-offs. I think the biggest thing is just learning how to play together. It's been so fun. It's been very fast paced."

Johnson says being an elite team will require each player taking the pride in defending.

"I think more than win, we want to dominate this year," she said. "So, dominating comes with really honing in on the defensive end."

Despite having eight new faces on the team, Johnson says the Tigers are clicking fast.

"I feel like this year is better because we can chew each other out and then really still be back on the same page," she said. "It's not no feelings. It's like we're all on the same page." **TR**

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Mikaylah Williams
Photo by: Michael Bacigalupi



LEADERSHIP BY EXAMPLE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH

LSU GUARD MIKAYLAH WILLIAMS PLANS ON BEING MORE OF A VOCAL
FORCE FOR KIM MULKEY'S TEAM IN HER THIRD SEASON

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Writer

If LSU junior guard Mikaylah Williams can match her elite 2024-25 season of 17.3 points, 4.5 rebounds, 3.4 assists and 1.1 steals a game, she will be part of the way there in coach Kim Mulkey's mind.

"Getting to the goal a lot more and using my body a lot more and going up with my left hand," Williams said.

That would work well.

But Mulkey wants something more on and off the court.

"I'm sure you must have heard coach Mulkey say, 'Leadership,'" Williams said. "Just being able to speak up, because normally I'm the type that just likes to lead by example."

Mulkey challenged the Bossier City native to become more of a vocal leader in the locker room, since she is one of the most experienced players on the team. And Williams is doing several things to become that new leader that the Tigers need her to be this season.

"I think just getting to know my teammates. Getting to learn how they learn," she said.

"And I think that's really just what I'm here to do, answer all of those questions, especially from the new players" she said. "And then just not only show them what to do, but tell them how to do various things as well."

Mulkey says she has already noticed Williams' approach to becoming a team leader.

"I think Mikaylah's embraced a leadership role," she said. "When you're young, you don't know really. 'Do I speak up? Do I not speak up?' Now, I

think she's very comfortable that she's earned the right as a junior now to go lead us. I think if you put her and Flau'Jae together, you're going to see great leadership from both of them on the floor."

Williams was one of the best scorers in the country last season, shooting 46 percent in field goals and 38 percent from beyond the arc. But Williams struggled with efficiency in stretches during SEC play, shooting below 38 percent against Auburn, South Carolina, Texas A&M, Texas and Georgia.

The ups and downs last season taught Williams to stick to the process and control what she can.

"Staying the course and staying in my center," she said. "I think not getting too high and not getting too low is kind of what towards the end can be consistent and efficient. So, I think just standing in my center, and making sure everybody around me is also standing in their center and ready to compete is really the only thing I have."

Williams' ability to score has always been the strength of her game, but Mulkey challenged her to become a better defender this summer.

"I want to see her continue to get better defensively," she said. "I want to challenge her to be able to guard the three ball. I want to challenge her when they come off a screen, get over that screen."

Williams says a key part to improving as a defender will be playing intensely for an entire opponent possession.

"I want to be a great defender," she said. "I think that I can guard pretty well. But once we get to the end of the shot clock is when those wide-open threes get to happening, and that's what I'm trying to fix."

Williams spent parts of last season playing forward and even defended post players, but the Tigers are taller this season.

"Obviously, I'm glad coach Mulkey trusted me with that when it needed to happen last year," she said. "This year, I'm not sure I need to do those things anymore. We've got Za'Kiyah Johnson, Grace Knox, Amiya Joyner, Kate Koval. So, I get to play my position now, and I'm just excited to see it all together."

With the addition of guard MiLaysia Fulwiley, Williams will be able to play off the ball more on the wing as a shooting guard.

"Mulkey loves transition. MiLaysia, we obviously all know how she is in transition," she said. "She's fun, explosive, fast, quick. We know Flau'Jae is the same way, so it's fun. And coach Mulkey's favorite thing to say is 'Showtime.' And that's what it is. We have all three of us striking on the perimeter."

At times last season, LSU's offense was stagnant outside of Aneesah Morrow and Williams. With the addition of Fulwiley, Williams believes the Tigers are going to be much harder to contain.

"Having someone like MiLaysia at the point guard helps spread out the floor," Williams said. "I'm excited to see what that looks like this season." **TR**



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A photograph of basketball player Milaysia Fulwiley in action. She is wearing a white South Carolina jersey with the number 12 and is shooting an orange NCAA basketball. The background shows a crowd of spectators in a gymnasium.

Milaysia Fulwiley
Photo by: University of South Carolina Athletics

DOUBLE AGENT AT LSU?

FORMER SOUTH CAROLINA GUARD MILAYSIA FULWILEY
LOOKING FORWARD TO FRESH START WITH OLD RIVAL

By ANDRE CHAMPAGNE, Tiger Rag Staff Writer

MiLaysia Fulwiley was one of the best players on South Carolina's dominant 2023-25 teams that reached three Final Fours, won the 2024 national title and finished runner-up last season.

The craziest part? She started in only three games while appearing in 77, usually as an off guard. After spending most of her life in Columbia, South Carolina, Fulwiley wanted a change of scenery. And that's how she ended up in Baton Rouge.

"A lot of people ask me, 'Why LSU?' And I'm like, 'Why not?' They're a great program," she said. "Kim Mulkey, she's a great coach, and everyone around her, they just helped me so much. When I was talking to them, I realized that's what I needed - a group of people that believe in me and just want to see me do better because I wanted better for myself. I told myself, 'Now, it's time to make that change.'"

As a junior last season, Fulwiley averaged 11.7 points, 2.8 rebounds, 2.0 assists, and 1.5 steals per game, and was named the SEC Sixth Woman of the

Year. But she is looking for a larger role at LSU as a point guard.

"They kind of play my style," she said. "I felt like I could probably be myself here."

At 5-foot-10, Fulwiley makes up for lack of height with flashy speed and elite footwork that make her one of the best defenders in the country. But just like all great players, Fulwiley is still trying to perfect her craft.

"I feel like my on-ball defense is very good, but, my off-ball can get better, and my mid-range jump shot," she said.

Fulwiley joins senior Flau'Jae Johnson and junior Mikaylah Williams in a loaded back court that she hopes to open up and take advantage of the wing positions.

"I like it a lot," she said. "I feel like I'm back to my normal self. I can just run the sets, run the plays, and I can score. I know how to get my other teammates open. And I like to try to draw so much attention on the ball, because they think I can drive, which I can. So, then that really opens it up for all our wings. "I

feel like what I'm going to be trying to do here at LSU will be good, and I just keep going and trying every day."

At first, Fulwiley thought Mulkey was too much to handle, as other players have thought. But she eventually discovered that there is a different side to Mulkey that many do not get to see outside of the Tigers' program.

"My initial thought was, 'She's crazy,'" Fulwiley said. "What drove me to her was how much she rode her players. Watching her on the sideline scream and doing all of that, you kind of realize she's not yelling at her players, she's riding for her players. It made me look at her differently, and it made me realize that she's for her players."

In just a few months, Fulwiley is enjoying Mulkey's energetic, in-your-face style of coaching.

"She has a different way of getting things across, but we understand it," she said. "She's very loud and very outgoing and energetic. I kind of use that as motivation for myself. It means she really wants us to be good." **TR**



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F

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SO | 6-5
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G

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SR | 5-10
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EPISCOPAL HS



15
F

MEGHAN YARNEVICH
FR | 6-0
POTOMAC, MD
THE BULLIS SCHOOL



16
G

KAILYN GILBERT
SR | 5-8
TAMPA BAY, FL
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23
G

MALAYSIA FULWILEY
JR | 5-10
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Thu. Nov 6	VS. SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Sun. Nov 9	AT GEORGIA SOUTHERN	Statesboro, Ga.	1:00PM, ESPN+
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Mon. Nov 17	AT TULANE	New Orleans, La.	6:00PM, ESPN+
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Thu. Dec 4	AT DUKE	Durham, N.C.	8:00PM, ESPN
Sun. Dec 7	AT NEW ORLEANS	New Orleans, La.	3:00PM, ESPN+
Sat. Dec 13	VS. LOUISIANA TECH	New Orleans, La.	5:00PM, ESPN+
Tue. Dec 16	VS. MORGAN STATE	Baton Rouge, La.	11:00AM, SECN+
Sun. Dec 21	VS. TEXAS-ARLINGTON	Baton Rouge, La.	1:00PM, SECN
Sun. Dec 28	VS. ALABAMA STATE	Baton Rouge, La.	3:00PM, SECN
Thu. Jan 1	VS. KENTUCKY	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Sun. Jan 4	AT VANDERBILT	Nashville, Tenn.	4:00PM, ESPN
Thu. Jan 8	AT GEORGIA	Athens, Ga.	5:30PM, SECN+
Sun. Jan 11	VS. TEXAS	Baton Rouge, La.	2:00PM, ESPN
Sun. Jan 18	AT OKLAHOMA	Norman, Okla.	2:00PM, ESPN2
Thu. Jan 22	AT TEXAS A&M	Bryan-College Station, Texas	8:00PM, SECN
Mon. Jan 26	VS. FLORIDA	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN
Thu. Jan 29	VS. ARKANSAS	Baton Rouge, La.	7:00PM, SECN+
Sun. Feb 1	VS. ALABAMA	Baton Rouge, La.	11:00AM, SECN
Thu. Feb 5	AT TEXAS	Austin, Texas	8:00PM, ESPN
Sun. Feb 8	AT AUBURN	Auburn, Ala.	1:00PM, SECN
Sat. Feb 14	VS. SOUTH CAROLINA	Baton Rouge, La.	7:30PM, ABC
Thu. Feb 19	AT OLE MISS	Oxford, Miss.	8:00PM, ESPN
Sun. Feb 22	VS. MISSOURI	Baton Rouge, La.	3:00PM, SECN
Thu. Feb 26	VS. TENNESSEE	Baton Rouge, La.	5:00PM, ESPN
Sun. Mar 1	AT MISSISSIPPI STATE	Starkville, Miss.	3:00PM, SECN
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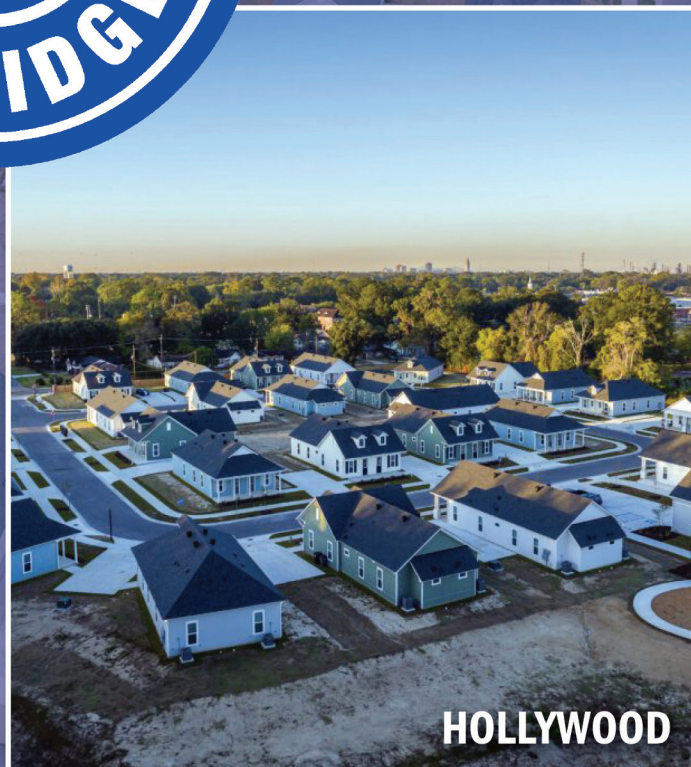
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LOUISIANA'S WHITE HOUSE TAKEOVER

PRESIDENT TRUMP HONORS LSU AND LSU-SHREVEPORT NATIONAL CHAMPION BASEBALL TEAMS

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

Louisiana basically hit a home run at the White House on Monday, Oct. 20.

President Donald Trump held a ceremony in the White House ballroom for the NCAA national champion LSU

(53-15) and NAIA national champion LSU-Shreveport (59-0) baseball teams.

"Both brought incredible pride, grit and glory to their schools and state, and they're bringing that same Louisiana

spirit to the White House," Trump said with players from both teams standing at attention behind him.

At opposite sides of the 47th president stood LSU coach Jay Johnson and LSU-S coach Brad Neffendorf, whom Trump mistakenly called Brett.

As Trump's federal government shut-down stretched into its third week at the time, he seemed to ask for assistance from the winners in the room.

"We should bring them into government," he said. "They don't need the baseball. We can bring them in. We could definitely use them."

Trump was particularly impressed with LSU's Kade Anderson, who finished 2025 at 12-1 with 180 strikeouts to lead the nation and was the World Series MVP before signing with Seattle for \$8.8 million as the draft's third pick.

"I would like to represent him," Trump joked. "I'm leaving the White House immediately. Got to have you at the White House. We like winners at the White House, Kade."

Trump introduced and shook hands with several players from each team, and each coach spoke.

"Mr. President, thank you, for having us in your home," Johnson said. "The main thing I take from you is work ethic. And no one works harder for America than you. Thank you for setting a good example. It's an honor of a lifetime to be in the home of the greatest country in the world. We are the college baseball capital of the world in 2025." **TR**

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LSU superstar **Angel Reese** shows Tiger fans where her national championship ring will go after beating Caitlin Clark and Iowa in the 2023 national championship game. Photo by LSU Athletics

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WHEN THE ANGEL REESE-CAITLIN CLARK RIVALRY BEGAN IN 2023

"ON HER GAME" BOOK ABOUT CLARK FINDS THE TRUTH

By GLENN GUILBEAU, Tiger Rag Editor

The WNBA Finals ended with Las Vegas beating Phoenix in October. Former LSU superstar Angel Reese was miles from that as her Chicago Sky finished last in the WNBA East Conference at 10-34.

And Caitlin "Ponytail Pete (Maravich)" Clark's season never got anywhere as a quadriceps injury limited the generational guard to 13 games. Her Indiana Fever finished 24-20 and in third in the East.

Better than either player's season is Christine Brennan's new book about Clark titled, "On Her Game: Caitlin Clark And The Revolution in Women's Sport."

Brennan is on her game as usual, uncovering a lot about Clark and all the silly, jealousy-filled controversies around her rookie WNBA season in 2024. There is great reporting about the immaturity of current and former WNBA players toward Clark and out of her league WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert failing to take advantage of, protect and embrace the great Clark.

But there is a significant amount about Reese and LSU coach Kim Mulkey beating Clark and Iowa, 102-85, on April 2, 2023, for LSU's first national championship in basketball. At 9.9 million viewers, it was the most watched women's game in 40 years.

There is also the truth about Reese's in-Clark's-face celebration before the game was over in the Simon & Schuster book that sells for \$29.99.

"I was waiting," Reese said of her "Can't See Me" gesture made famous by wrestler John Cena and LSU receiver Demetrius Byrd (vs. Auburn in 2007). Reese put her hand in Clark's face and showed her where the championship ring would go. Watch any other championship final, and players usually only go to their teammates to celebrate.

"Caitlin is a hell of a player, for sure, but I don't take disrespect lightly," Reese said, referencing what many thought Clark did in an Elite Eight win over Louisville to guard Hailey Van Lith, who would transfer to LSU for the next season. "And she disrespected."

But Clark did not.

While becoming the first player in NCAA Tournament history – male or female – to put up a 40-point triple double (41 points, 12 assists, 10 rebounds), Clark hit a three and did the "Can't See Me."

Social media cried that Clark was taunting Van Lith, and Reese bit hard but wrong.

"We were laughing about it, because she did it to her strength coach," Van Lith said two months later to Bleacher Report. "She didn't do it to anyone on our team, especially me. I didn't even see it."

Must have not been right in her face. **TR**

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ANDRE CHAMPAGNE

Tiger Rag Staff Writer

Over the 50 years of rich history, LSU women's basketball has put out several successful back courts. There is a real possibility that this season's guard trio that will feature Flau'Jae Johnson, Mikaylah Williams and MiLaysia Fulwiley could become one of the best to come out of Baton Rouge.

Recently, coach Kim Mulkey's back courts have been impressive, most notably when Johnson and Williams paired with Hailey Van Lith. But none of them come close to LSU's four-guard combo of 2003-04 that rocked the college basketball world - Temeka Johnson at the point with Seimone Augustus, Doneeka Hodges and Scholanda Hoston.

Johnson had an elite season and led the way with 10 double-doubles during the '03 season and was an outstanding play maker and was able to create offense. She starred beyond her 5-foot-3 height. Johnson was only 5-3, but that didn't stop her from running the offense effectively.

She was named to the All-SEC First Team and was an honorable mention to the Associated Press All-American team. Johnson was also one of three finalists for the Nancy Liebermann Award as the nation's best point guard.

During the 2002-03 season, Augustus took the women's college basketball world by storm. Augustus was named First-Team All-SEC and was named an Associate Press Third-Team All-American after an impressive year. She became

the 23rd player in school history to reach 1,000 points.

Hoston also had a productive year for the Tigers. She was a balanced player that provided an offensive spark, specifically from behind the three-point arc.

Hodges is one of the best three-point shooters that LSU's program has ever seen. She had a stellar season, finishing the year with Second-Team All-SEC honors. Hodges finished her career ranked second at LSU in career three-point field goals made with 189, second in three-point field goals attempted with 545 and ranks seventh in career three-point field goal percentage (34.7)

All three combined to give opposing defenses nightmares. Johnson, Augustus and Hodges were major contributors to the Tigers making a Final Four appearance in 2004.

"That was a crazy back court. I think that was probably one of the quickest back courts that we had and one of the most talented," Augustus told Tiger Rag. "Temeka was obviously one of the top point guards. I was one of the top wing players in my time, and Scholanda and Doneeka were two utility players, but they were very good at what they did. Scholanda was like our defensive anchor, and then Doneeka was more like the facilitator."

Now, LSU has its most talented trio under Mulkey since being at LSU, and who knows how far it may take the Tigers.

"When you look at Flau'Jae, she's more like Scholanda," Augustus said. "She was able to get up and down the floor. Very athletic. Transition was her thing, active

on defense, high energy-type player. That's Flau'Jae. I would put Mikayla more as a combo between Temeka and Doneeka. She has incredible speed and athleticism, but also has a poise about her that's kind of uncommon when you think about players with so much athleticism."

The three haven't played with each other for long, but Augustus says the trio brings the same vibe of her championship years playing with the Minnesota Lynx.

"All of them are wild about each other like, 'Oh my God, we're playing with each other,'" Augustus said. "But then at the same time, they know they have to put it together. And we are starting to see some of their leadership come out."

Even though we haven't seen this year's backcourt on the floor yet, the combination of Johnson, Williams and Fulwiley together will pose many challenges for opposing offenses. In the 2024-25 season, Johnson averaged 1.7 steals and 0.9 blocks a game. Williams averaged 1.1 steals a game, and Fulwiley averaged 1.5 steals and 0.8 blocks per game.

The trio has all the talent in the world, but all three have to be able to translate it both on and off the court. Much like the LSU 2025 baseball championship team, the trio is prioritizing becoming closer with each other, which could help lead to more success.

"Off the court has been great. They've been together all the time. On the court, it's more like a respect thing," Augustus said.

**TODD HORNE**

Vice President / Executive Editor

The scoreboard tells a harsh truth for LSU men's basketball.

Under Matt McMahon, the Tigers hold a 45–53 overall record and a dismal 14–40 in SEC play. Last year, they finished 15th in a 16-team conference with a 3–15 record. Heading into Year 4, the program feels fragile. Preseason polls predict another tough season, and booster patience is wearing thin. This year isn't about progress; it's about winning.

On paper, McMahon finally has the players he needs. Junior forward Jalen Reed returns from a torn ACL. Top point guard Dedan Thomas Jr. is joining from UNLV. Six-foot-10 forward Mike Nwoko transfers from Mississippi State, and sharpshooter PJ Carter comes over from Memphis. Adding five-star recruit Jalen Reece makes LSU's roster look strong. "We checked some big boxes in the portal,"

THE CLOCK IS TICKING: WHY MATT MCMAHON'S LSU TENURE RELIES ON A 2026 BREAKTHROUGH

McMahon says. "The point guard position is key—making plays and elevating teammates. That's what we need."

But talent alone can't erase memories of blowout losses and late-game failures. McMahon, 47, knows the clock is ticking. "Every year in college athletics is a one-year deal," he told Tiger Rag. "I focus on what I can control. How do we maximize this team? How do we build the best team we can now?" This is classic McMahon: optimistic and process-driven, yet aware that anything less than an NCAA Tournament appearance in 2026 could cost him his job.

The stakes are high. LSU hasn't reached the NCAA Tournament since 2021. With SEC rivals like Alabama and Kentucky getting stronger, the margin for error is slim. The Tigers nearly broke even in 2023–24 at 17–16 (9–9 SEC), but last season exposed serious defensive issues. LSU allowed 73.8 points per game, ranking 228th nationally in defense. The question now is: Can the new frontcourt and revamped backcourt improve defense enough to turn close losses into wins?

McMahon's goal is clear: "We want to get back to the NCAA Tournament and win there," he says. His plan focuses on improved size and creating a solid team identity. At Murray State, his teams were

tough on defense and fast in transition, partly due to players like Ja Morant. At LSU, success depends on turning new talent into immediate impact and building teamwork quickly.

Off the court, resources remain a challenge. Despite recent revenue gains, LSU ranks low in SEC NIL spending—single-digit millions compared to \$15 million or more at top programs. McMahon stays focused: "I love our fan base," he says. "But I don't really listen to criticism." Still, booster groups are ready to support a coaching change if the program falters again.

As the Tigers start the season, the message is clear: Year 4 isn't about a long rebuild. It's a test of McMahon's ability to turn talent into postseason success. LSU's campus buzzes with excitement, but beneath the spirit lies a ticking clock. By March, the Tigers must prove they belong in March Madness—or the wake-up call in the PMAC could lead to a new voice. "We've built a roster that gives us a better chance," McMahon says. "Now it's about winning." Time to deliver.

Todd Horne is the vice president and executive editor of Tiger Rag and started covering LSU sports in 1986. He is a graduate of LSU's Journalism School. Reach Todd at todd@tigerrag.com

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**DALE BROWN***Tiger Rag Featured Columnist*

Two days before I was born, my father left my mother and me and my two sisters, ages 11 and 12, and he never returned. His departure put my mother in a difficult position.

She had an eighth-grade education, came off the farm in North Dakota, and couldn't get a job during the Great Depression in 1935. She had to do several things that were unpleasant for her: she became a babysitter and cleaned people's houses, and she had to put our family on welfare.

We lived in a one-room apartment above a bar and hardware store, and I remember my mother getting a monthly check of \$42.50 from Ward County Welfare. She would sit down and meticulously decide what food she could buy for the coming week.

More than once during these difficult times she taught me lessons that have stayed with me my entire life. From her, I learned honesty, courtesy, and consideration of others. She was a model of courage and tenacity.

I saw her put on her winter coat, walk down a flight of stairs, and take back to the Red Owl and the Piggly Wiggly grocery stores 25 cents and 40 cents because the clerks had given her too much change for the groceries she bought.

My mother was graceful and modest. She followed the advice of St. Francis of Assisi, who said, "Preach the gospel every day, and if necessary use words." That's how she taught us many of life's lessons: by her actions, by her example.

Not once did I hear her talk negatively about the man who walked out on us and never returned, never sent any money,

YOUR CHARACTER IS WHO YOU TRULY ARE

never wrote. She didn't smoke, drink, swear, speak badly about anyone, or ever date anyone. She never seemed to be bitter or angry, and I never heard her complain about her situation in life.

My mother's Catholic faith seemed to be unshakeable. She brought me to Mass and Communion daily – not just on Sundays, but daily. For me, the daily trip to church was a ritual. To my numerous fake illnesses and attempts to get out of going, my mom's response was always the same: "Get up son. We're going to church."

Being a small place, our apartment was uncomfortable and cramped. It never provided any place for me to get away on my own. So, at night I often went outside to sit on the fire escape above the alley. One night I'll never forget, when I came back in from sitting out there, my mom asked me to sit in her little rocker. She pulled up a footstool and we talked.

"I am embarrassed to tell you this," she said, "but it is something you should know. When people come to pick me up to go babysit, I am so embarrassed about our situation that I look up big words in the dictionary, and then all the way to their house I inject these big words into our conversation to try to impress them. That's called making an image.

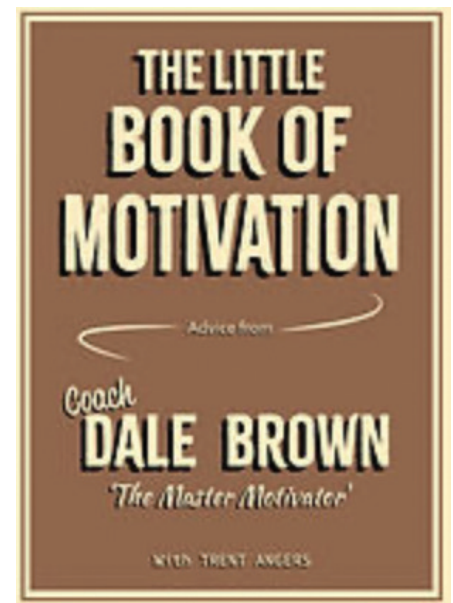
"If you spend too much time polishing your image, you'll eventually tarnish your character and be an unhappy man."

That night, my mom taught me that being my true self was far more important than trying to impress people or pretend to be someone I was not. The lesson here is that your character is who you really are, and your image is what you are perceived to be.

I believe that if William Shakespeare were around today, he would agree wholeheartedly, considering the famous line he wrote in the play Hamlet:

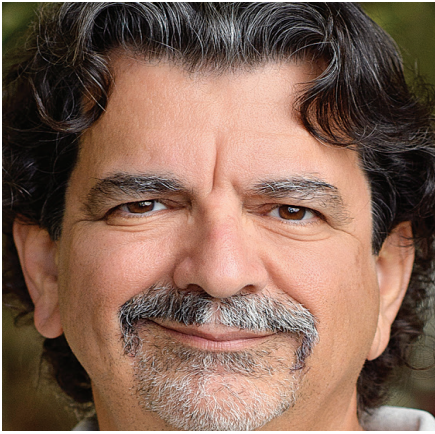
"To thine own self be true. And it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

This is one of the guiding principles I've tried to live by my entire adult life. I highly recommend it as a prerequisite to true happiness and peace of mind.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Take a sneak peek inside *THE LITTLE BOOK OF MOTIVATION*! You can secure your copy at <https://coachdalebrown.com>. This compact gem spans just 112 pages, yet it's overflowing with inspiration from Dale Brown, one of America's finest motivational maestros and a former LSU basketball coach.

Think of this book as the written essence of his most unforgettable speeches. Dive into themes like courage, integrity, leadership, tolerance, and teamwork. Brown unveils tried-and-true methods to discover happiness, attain success, and achieve peace of mind. Don't miss your chance to transform motivation into action!



JIM KLEINPETER

Tiger Rag Featured Columnist

MULKEY: “ALL IN, ALL YEAR”

At Kim Mulkey’s welcome-back event Oct. 7, a chance for fans to meet LSU women’s basketball players, get autographs and a taste of what to expect in her fifth season, she scrolled through her 10 foundational points for 2025-26.

The first seven remain the same year-to-year since her days as a player and coach at Louisiana Tech. The last three change each season depending on her team. No. 10 serves as the season theme.

For 2025-26 that would be ‘All In, All Year’ and it’s fitting because with only five returning players, questions outnumber answers on how the team structure will play out.

After senior Flau’jae Johnson and junior Mikayla Williams, the returning players accounted for two starts last season, one each by senior Kailyn Gilbert and sophomore Jada Richard. For the first time since her inaugural season, Mulkey doesn’t have a high-level front court player in place.

Johnson and Williams are both perimeter players capable of winning conference Player of the Year honors, but the rest of the team will take time coming into focus.

Mulkey snagged a pair of veteran forwards in the transfer portal in Notre Dame sophomore Kate Koval and East Carolina’s Amiya Joyner. But it’s clear freshmen like Megham Yarnevich and Grace Knox, with swing player ZaKiyah Johnson who is listed as a guard,

will have to produce competition, if not minutes.

There is easily going to be the most dependence Mulkey has placed on the incoming freshman class since her arrival, especially in that frontcourt.

“They’d better be ready,” Mulkey said. “Nobody in the post is a returning player. They need to have the mindset, ‘I’m going to play; I’m going to make mistakes but I’m going to play.’”

Koval’s path might be the team’s biggest key and Mulkey already likes her confidence in an early leadership role. She played in 32 games with 10 starts for the Irish and while she averaged only 5.3 points and 4.7 rebounds, she blocked 55 shots. Her numbers are likely to improve with more playing time.

Mulkey was familiar with her before the portal having recruited as a high school senior.

“She will remind you of a mother hen; she’s young herself but has experience. I like her demeanor, how she involves everybody. She helps the young ones, but she will also demand the ball. She’s very confident.”

Joyner brings impact numbers and senior leadership after making the AAC All-Conference team last season and being named Freshman of the Year three seasons ago. She averaged 15 points and 9.2 rebounds, promising some good frontcourt play.

“She’s a very good basketball player. I think we got a steal in the portal with her,” Mulkey said. “I’m impressed with things she can do physically. She’s funny. When she messes up she’ll smile and pop herself in the head and the kids just laugh.”

Between Knox, Yarnevich and Johnson, Mulkey will have to identify a third big to rotate in and she hasn’t had much luck keeping the forwards she signed as LSU freshmen. Knox was the No. 6 player in the nation according to ESPN, bolstering LSU’s No. 1-ranked class and is known to be a tenacious rebounder and defender. That’s all Mulkey would need from a third forward.

Yarnevich is another tough, physical player who averaged a double-double as a high school senior. Johnson is listed as a perimeter player, but she and Williams can both move into the front court if need be.

The most interesting addition overall is MiLaysia Fulwiley, who left a key role at arch-rival South Carolina for LSU in a move that likely involved NIL money. Fulwiley averaged 11.7 points per game as the first player off the bench last year and gives LSU a point guard option, although it’s not her primary position.

Fulwiley was looking for more playing time after averaging 18 minutes of floor time. Her arrival gives LSU a strong back court, but it remains to be seen how she adapts to a different role. Mulkey tried to convert off guard Hailey Van Lith to the point two seasons ago after her transfer from Louisville. It was neither a failure nor a complete success and she transferred out.

Jim Kleinpeter is a graduate of the LSU School of Journalism. He has been a sportswriter for 37 years, including 33 at the Times-Picayune. Reach him at jkleinpeter@gmail.com.

**JIM ENGSTER***President, Tiger Rag Magazine*

At 64, Brian Keith Kelly is LSU's oldest head coach on record. Of any sport. He has six years remaining on his contract with a buyout provision that would pay him approximately \$50 million if he is told to leave.

Kelly resides in a regal home on the LSU lakes and has no fear of being unable to pay his bill at the Four Seasons in New Orleans. He enjoys comfort and luxury in a state where one in five families live below the federal poverty line of \$32,500 for a four-person household.

Like 37 other states, Louisiana's highest paid public official is either a football or basketball coach at a university. In the age of the imperial coach, these men are bestowed with reverence. Until they lose. LSU's demanding fans are of the mind that Kelly is not producing results commensurate with the blockbuster contract that lured him from Notre Dame.

Much has been made of Nick Saban, Les Miles and Ed Orgeron capturing national championships in four years or fewer at LSU. These are the most recent predecessors of Kelly, but it should also be noted that Gerry DiNardo, Curley Hallman, Mike Archer and Jerry Stovall were fired inside five full seasons while holding the same post as the trio of titlists.

Despite victory on the grandest stage, Miles and Orgeron were also dismissed as was the school's winningest coach. Charles McClendon was pushed out of Death Valley after 137 wins in 18 seasons when the schedule included just ten or eleven regular season dates.

Since Paul Dietzel defected to Army in January of 1962, only Saban and

IS CLOCK TICKING ON BK IN BR?

Bill Arnsparger have departed Baton Rouge with their dignity intact. Of the seven football coaches who were fired at LSU in the last 46 years, DiNardo and Miles are the outliers who landed future head coaching jobs with schools in major conferences.

DiNardo was 8-27 overall at Indiana and 3-21 in the Big Ten from 2002-2004 while his successor in bayou country was really bringing the magic back with a national title in January of 2004. Miles went 3-18 at Kansas with a 1-16 Big 12 record in 2019 and 2020 as Orgeron was producing the most prolific national championship unit of all time. O's 15-0 Tigers of 2019 were the envy of the world while Miles fumed with a cellar dweller in Lawrence, KS.

Saban, Miles and Orgeron needed breaks to reach their pinnacle. Saban's 2003 squad lost by 12 points at home to Florida. Miles survived two defeats in 2007 and Orgeron required a 46-41 classic victory at Alabama to win the SEC West in the epic march of 2019.

BK is striving to keep fickle fans at bay and to retain a donor base that contributed nearly \$20 million to stock this year's roster. The zone for subpar seasons has eroded while buyouts for embattled coaches have exploded.

McClendon's parting gift when he was canned was a new Cadillac. When he attempted to drive home to his modest abode on Menlo Drive, he had been given the wrong keys to the Caddy. There was no multi-million-dollar parting gift for Mac, who was 56, and considered too old for the coaching game in 1980.

Mac finally packed after 27 years on the LSU staff, and 42 days later, Bo Rein's plane crashed. The charismatic 34-year-old leader perished in the Atlantic Ocean with pilot Lewis Benscoter on Jan. 10, 1980.

Stovall was summoned from the Varsity Club to navigate a ship without a rudder. He was 42 when fired by the LSU Board of Supervisors on Dec. 2, 1983. He took a job at a bank to keep his finances in or-

der. Unlike Mac, Stovall did receive pay for one year remaining on his contract. And he never coached again.

Kelly was a rich man when he arrived at LSU four Decembers ago. He was hailed as the most victorious coach in Notre Dame's storied past, but Irish zealots were restless for the national throne that has not featured the iconic school in South Bend since Lou Holtz won it all in 1988.

Kelly was only 27 when Notre Dame last reigned supreme, and he showed sufficient tenacity to weather at 4-8 campaign at 55 in 2016 before posting a 54-9 record in his last five seasons under the Golden Dome. Kelly has demonstrated an ability to adjust to hard times once before.

At major football factories on college campuses, there are only a few coaches who could withstand a single 4-8 season today. Goodwill from previous success has been supplanted by impatience about huge salaries and lackluster results.

Bear Bryant and Woody Hayes secured eleven championships at Tuscaloosa and Columbus, but in the contemporary win at all cost environment, both legends would have likely been fired at Alabama and Ohio State when they experienced hiccups in the middle of their tenure.

Bryant was 60-5-1 from 1961-66 with three claimed NCAA titles and four SEC banners. Alabama then struggled from 1967-70 at 28-15-2 without a conference crown. Today, the Bear would be sent to the showers for losing his edge. He responded to the four-year downturn by going 116-15-1 with three more national championships and nine more SEC titles from 1971-81. The Tide posted 69-4 SEC record in those seasons. Yes, there were only four league losses in eleven years for Bryant. LSU was 0-11 vs. the Tide in that period.

Woody Hayes collected top honors in 1954, 1957 and 1961 with Ohio State before stumbling to a 35-18-1 mark from 1962-67. The next season, his

ENGSTER COLUMN cont. page 60

WHAT THEY READ

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Ryland Stafford

What I'm reading -

Never Lie

by Freida McFadden

"Never Lie" is a 2023 psychological thriller. A couple is stranded during a snow storm in a very remote mansion. While stranded, they discover a secret room containing audio tapes from the previous owner, a missing psychiatrist, which reveal a chain of disturbing events and shocking secrets about the couple themselves, ultimately leading to a major twist ending.

ENGSTER COLUMN cont. from page 59

Buckeyes went 10-0 in 1968 and gave him a fourth NCAA ring. Hayes lost just eight conference games from 1968-77 and won nine Big Ten titles and another two national championships at the Ohio capital.

Patience is often a virtue when a solid coach hits a bad patch. Buyouts are convenient for donors who elevate football to gargantuan proportions when measuring the status of a university. Football does pay the freight for all other sports on campus, but former LSU Chancellor Mike Martin had it right when he said, "It's the front porch of the university, not the whole house."

Kelly is an intense competitor and would prefer a legacy in line with Saban or Bryant or Hayes. But he has never hoisted a national championship trophy, and his window of opportunity is closing.

BK has six years remaining at LSU in the best-case scenario. Six weeks left is the worst-case forecast. His fate will be determined by people who lack

historical context and coaching acumen. The massive buyout gives the man from Massachusetts the last laugh.

Kelly started his public odyssey as a driver for presidential candidate Gary Hart in 1984 when BK was 20. Hart was driven from public life when he was caught on the Monkey Business with New Orleans native Donna Rice. It was a politico named Billy Broadhurst from Louisiana who arranged the ill-fated trip to Bimini.

Kelly knows from the experience of Hart the danger of accepting offers from Louisiana men. The coach reportedly rejected the first overture from Scott Woodward four years ago. The next six weeks should determine whether BK made the right decision in accepting the second call from the LSU athletic director.

Talk Louisiana with Jim Engster is streamed statewide weekdays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and is aired on WRKF Talk 89.3 FM in Baton Rouge as the flagship station. Jim is a graduate of the LSU School of Journalism. Reach him at: jim@louisianaradionetwork.com.



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