

New ASU women's basketball coach has sights set on championships

Molly Miller, who led Grand Canyon University to its first NCAA tournament, to take over Sun Devil program

By Scott Bordow, ASU News
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Molly Miller apologized for being a few minutes late for her Zoom interview Sunday afternoon.

No apology was necessary.

It's been a crazy and hectic 72 hours for Miller, who guided Grand Canyon University to its first berth in the NCAA women's basketball tournament, and then on Saturday was named coach of Arizona State University's women's basketball program.

By Sunday, Miller already had ditched the purple of Grand Canyon for the gold of ASU and was ready to take on the job leading the Sun Devils to, as she put it, "net cutting and championships year after year."

"It's been a whirlwind," said Miller, 39. "Between having to put a staff together and getting recruiting started and getting your current team figured out, and then texts and media obligations and appearances, there's not enough hours in the day.

"But that's OK. There's no time to be tired. And when you have as much anticipation and excitement for something ... I just love this. This is how I'm wired. I wouldn't want it any other way. If I was just twiddling my thumbs, there would be something wrong."

Miller's track record speaks for itself. She went 117-38 at Grand Canyon, and before that won 180 games in six seasons coaching at her alma mater, Drury University, in Springfield, Missouri. Her winning percentage as a college coach is .845.

"We are absolutely thrilled to welcome coach Molly Miller to the Sun Devil family. Molly's track record of excellence — both on and off the court — aligns seamlessly with our vision for ASU

women's basketball," said Graham Rossini, ASU athletics director. "She has built winning cultures at every level, from her days as a high school state champion and valedictorian to becoming one of the most exciting and sought-after coaches in Division I basketball."

Spend just a few minutes with Miller and it's clear one characteristic will come to define ASU women's basketball: energy.

Here's the way Miller describes the brand of basketball ASU will play:

"You will see relentless energy and effort," she said. "The non-negotiables for me are effort and attitude and energy and your body language. You're going to see a coach on the sideline that's just going to pour into our players, give them energy and lift them up in competition."

"We're going to play hard. We're committed to the defensive side of the ball. No one will want to play against our defense. It's like (how) no one wants to go to the dentist. That will be a staple of our program moving forward."

If that sounds a little bit like ASU head football coach Kenny Dillingham's philosophy, well, that's a vibe she strongly believes in.

"We're both people persons," she said. "We're only as good as the people around us, whether that's fans, support staff, boosters... I'm going to welcome everyone with open arms, and I want to do this together. We can't be successful unless we're in this together."

"I'm a Sun Devil, I want to be a Sun Devil for life, and I want everyone to rally around this program. I've seen Kenny do that with his football program. Now, I might need some tips and tricks on recruiting and a campus tour, but I'm definitely going to channel that energy and excitement about Sun Devil Athletics."

The last time the women's basketball team would have played in the NCAA tournament was in 2019–20, but it was cancelled because of COVID; but Miller believes everything is in place to replicate if not build on the success that former coach Charli Turner Thorne enjoyed, reaching the tournament 14 times.

In fact, Turner Thorne was one of the first phone calls Miller made after getting the ASU job, and Miller joked, "I'm going to have her on speed dial. I hope she doesn't get sick of me."

"I want to rejuvenate the love for the program," Miller said. "And I just believe so much in (Rossini's) vision and what we can do at ASU. With the resources and the commitment to women's basketball, we can do anything. And it's a phenomenal school. I mean, it's one of the best schools in the world. So I get to recruit to the best of both worlds."

Miller smiles broadly when she thinks of the path that got her to ASU. After graduating from Drury University where she had been a point guard, she worked at a neurological and spine institute in Springfield, Missouri, reconciling the budget and managing 12 neurosurgeons. Coaching wasn't on her mind — at all.

But people kept telling her she should go into coaching, and when an assistant's job opened at Drury, she asked the head coach if he would encourage her to apply for the job.

“Heck, yeah,” he said.

Miller was hired, became the head coach two years later and now here she is, in maroon and gold and thinking about championships.

“This is the big time,” said Miller, who’s married with two children, Crosby and Cy. “And I’m really excited about the opportunity.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



New ASU women's basketball coach Molly Miller. Photo courtesy of Sun Devil Athletics