

OSU coach Kurt Budke, assistant coach Miranda Serna killed in plane crash

(STILLWATER, Okla., November 18, 2011) -- Oklahoma State University women's basketball coach Kurt Budke and assistant women's basketball coach Miranda Serna were killed along with two others Thursday night in a plane crash in Perry County, Arkansas.

Budke and Serna were on a recruiting trip to Arkansas. The other two individuals, including the pilot, were not affiliated with the university. There were no survivors.

"The Oklahoma State family is devastated by this tragedy," said OSU President Burns Hargis. "Our hearts and prayers go out to the families of Kurt Budke, Miranda Serna and the other victims.

"Kurt was an exemplary leader and a man of character who had a profound impact on his student-athletes," Hargis said. "He was an outstanding coach and a wonderful person. We send our deepest sympathies to his wife, Shelley, and their children, Sara, Alex and Brett.

"Coach Budke elevated our women's basketball program to new levels of success," Hargis said. "He and his staff raised our profile in the nation's toughest conference."

"Miranda was an up-and-coming coach and an outstanding role model for our young ladies."

Mike Holder, OSU vice president for athletics, said, "We are shocked by this terrible loss. Kurt Budke was an incredibly positive influence on his players and was a tremendous coach. He quickly turned our program around and put Cowgirl basketball on the map. Miranda was a tireless worker and great recruiter."

Holder said Jim Littell, associate head coach, would assume duties as interim head coach. The university announced the Cowgirls will not play games scheduled Saturday and Sunday. OSU counselors and athletic staff are offering assistance to the Cowgirl student-athletes and staff.

Budke was in his seventh season as Cowgirl coach, with an all-time record of 112-83. His team was 1-0 after a convincing victory over Rice Sunday. Under his direction, OSU made postseason appearances each of the past five seasons, including three trips to the NCAA tournament.

In the 2009-10 season, the Cowgirls won 24 games, including a school-record six victories against Top 25 teams, achieved a top-10 national ranking for the first time ever and reached the second round of the NCAA Tournament.

Budke transformed a program that endured a winless conference season in 2005-06 into a league title contender and NCAA Sweet 16 participant just two years later.

Before coming to OSU in 2005, Budke was a head coach for 12 seasons at Allen County (Ks.) Community College, Trinity Valley (Tx.) Community College and Louisiana Tech. His career record as a head coach was 465-130. Budke started coaching in 1984 as a graduate assistant at Washburn University before taking an assistant coaching position at Friends University.

A Salina, Kan., native, Budke earned all-conference honors as a player at Barton County (Ks.) Junior College in 1981. Budke was born June 3, 1961 and is married to the former Shelley Balthazor. They have three children; Sara, who is a student at OSU, Alex and Brett.

Miranda Serna was in her seventh season as an assistant coach at Oklahoma State. She previously worked in the same capacity at Louisiana Tech under Budke.

Serna helped guide the resurgence of the OSU women's basketball as the program's recruiting coordinator. As a player, the Guadalupita, N.M. native helped lead Trinity Valley Community College to the NJCAA national title in 1996 and finished her collegiate career at Houston.