

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Thursday, October 7, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Iowa Hawkeyes

Women's Head Coach

## Lisa Bluder



LISA BLUDER: Good morning. It's good to be here. I have to tell you, it was very strange walking into the building this morning in October versus in March. But it feels good to be here. We're hoping obviously for a long stay in March.

I know it's sounding like a worn out statement because I think we're all saying the same thing, but Big Ten women's basketball is better than ever.

Our conference has so much to be excited about coming off of the success of last year. I honestly believe it's easier to be in the Sweet 16 than it is to win the Big Ten Championship. As evidenced from last year, four teams from the Big Ten being in the Sweet 16 and seven All-Americans returning this year.

Of course, at Iowa the excitement is at an all-time high. Season tickets are at an all-time high. Our fan base is ready to come back to Carver-Hawkeye Arena, make it one of the hardest places to play in women's basketball in the country.

We have a lot to build around with all five starters returning. Of course, coming off of a Big Ten Championship appearance and a Sweet 16 appearance, all five of those women coming back, including, you may have heard of her, Caitlin Clark. We think she's one of the nation's best. Monika Czinano, who led the country in field goal percentage last year. Our supporting cast is what makes it all work, Gabbie Marshall and McKenna Warnock. I think we've had a deeper bench than we've ever had.

**Q. Regarding Caitlin, how has she handled the NIL world that comes with being one of the best players in the country?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, she had a tremendous summer. She won our third gold medal at USA Basketball. The MVP of that team. She deserves all the accolades that are coming her way.

How is she handling it? Not a bit differently than what she

came in as a freshman. You would not know there's any more pressure on her by the way she acts in practice or around the team. The NIL is something, yeah, that she's dealing with. I think she has a great supportive team around her to help her with that situation. We're proud of the fact that one of our players is so sought after for the NIL. We think that's a tremendous thing for our program.

In Iowa we always say there's no pro sports. The Iowa Hawkeyes are a big deal. When you're a big deal, you get attendance. Two years ago we were the ninth best attended team in the United States. Also it gives you opportunities for things that will help you with the NIL.

**Q. You talked about Monika, the way she's played the last couple years. Who is going to back her up now with Sharon Goodman being injured?**

LISA BLUDER: Sharon Goodman, that was a big loss. In our first practice this year, she unfortunately went down with an ACL tear. Sharon was playing great. Last year she shot 55% from the field, she was a tremendous backup to Monika because she was so strong. She was playing at a better level this year, this summer, than last year. So her game had really improved. I was really expecting big things from Sharon.

Obviously with her now gone for the year, we'll be moving Addi O'Grady, who is a freshman, but is our tallest player on our roster at 6'4". From Denver, Colorado, had a great career there. She'll be moving into that backup position for Monika.

**Q. Lisa, Gustafson, Doyle, Clark, teams across the country would love to have those three names at all in their programs. How do you attract those type of players that makes Iowa such a force every year?**

LISA BLUDER: I think there's a lot of things. I think we have an incredible winning tradition with our basketball program. People want to play for people that win. They also want to play in front of a crowd. Our attendance is tremendous. They're loud and they're enthusiastic, and they make it a great home-court advantage for us.



Our players graduate. That's exciting for the women. But also I think it's the culture of our program. I think when they come on campus, they feel how much this team cares about each other. Our culture is as strong as it's ever been. I think that is what attracting people to our program.

Also the stability of our coaching staff. We are the longest serving coaching staff in the Big Ten. I think parents respect the stability of that.

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