

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Friday, October 8, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

## Northwestern Wildcats

Women's Head Coach

### Joe McKeown



JOE McKEOWN: First I want to thank the Big Ten for this opportunity to bring the men and women basketball programs together. It's just awesome. Really excited to be part of it. I've been doing this awhile. For our players, our programs, women's basketball in the Big Ten I think is probably as strong as it's ever been. Just to be part of hopefully coming back here and maybe winning one of these trophies in March, it would be a lot of fun.

Again, thanks to also Commissioner Warren, his commitment to basketball, women's basketball. We're just really excited.

To have the opportunity to coach at Northwestern over the next four years, it's really important to me and my family. From Dr. Gragg, the people that have invested in me, just a special place to coach.

I like our team. I think I have one of the great guards in college basketball in Veronica Burton. Won a gold medal with USA Basketball this summer. She just makes me a really good coach on game day. Really have a top 10 recruiting class with freshmen. I don't really like rankings, but we have five freshmen I think are really going to help us. Coming off a great year. Coming off a COVID year where we won the Big Ten championship, felt like we were going to make a deep run in the NCAA.

We're still trying to build off of that. We lost Lindsey Pulliam who was drafted in the WNBA, scored 2,000 points. Trying to find out how to replace her. She's playing right now in Turkey. Probably scored 30 today.

A lot of change in our program from the standpoint of roster. Really like our young players. They're talented. They're still trying to figure out where the dorm is, where the food is, hopefully where the gym is.

A lot of good things are happening at Northwestern. Proud to be part of it. Last year, to be in San Antonio, have a chance. Our league had such a great run, we got beat in a great game where we led Louisville most of the game and got beat to go to the Sweet 16. A bittersweet taste. A lot

of our players are looking forward to competing again and to have fans back. Really important in the Big Ten obviously. One of the great leagues as far as women basketball fans.

Appreciate any questions.

**Q. Just wanted your thoughts on the extension, kind of what it means to you given what the team has gone through the last couple years.**

JOE McKEOWN: I think the biggest thing is just stability. Having been there 14 years, I coached GW for, I don't know, 20 years. We're really blessed as a family. Coaches don't get to coach at the same school for a long, long time anymore. I think that's a thing we're really appreciative of.

From a recruiting standpoint, we got this great program, and we want people to know I'm going to be the head coach. I think that's something that's important to our whole staff.

**Q. You and I sat in this same building eating lunch one day, the first Big Ten tournament you ever participated in. One of the things you told me was it's going to take hard work and patience to make this work. Do you want to expound on that now years later?**

JOE McKEOWN: Yeah, I remember that, too. I was pretty prophetic in that. I was coming off a GW run where we had top-10 teams every year. When I took over Northwestern, they finished last four or five years in a row, hadn't won a game in the Big Ten a couple times.

People thought I was crazy, like, What are you doing? But we saw the potential. We saw the opportunities. So I think now we're starting. Now we have as good a facility as there is in college basketball, all of our sports. Chris Collins and I benefit from what's happened.

When we first got there, we'd play games with snow coming in. We called timeouts just to clear the floor again. We've made a lot of progress.



