

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Illinois Fighting Illini

Men's Head Coach

## Brad Underwood



KEVIN WARREN: Next to the podium will be the head basketball coach at the University of Illinois, Brad Underwood, who has had a successful run in the Big Ten Conference. Not only is he an incredible coach but he's really focused on bringing awareness to cancer through the American Cancer Society, partnership with Coaches Versus Cancer. He hosted a fundraiser dinner called Kicking Cancer which raised nearly \$300,000 that was donated to Coaches Versus Cancer.

One of our greatest coaches in the country, happy he's here in the Big Ten Conference, head basketball coach at the University of Illinois, Brad Underwood.

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be in Minneapolis.

We're excited about another great year of Big Ten basketball. It's something that I take a great deal of pride in being a part of this conference that has been the best basketball league in the country the last few years in particular.

Esteemed coaches, great, great players. Last year was a record year with guys moving on, going to the draft. I think it speaks volumes to the quality of teams with nine teams in the tournament. It's something I'm extremely proud of.

Being at the University of Illinois, finding ways to continue to beat these guys, is fun. We have our hands full this year with a new team, coming off a Big Ten championship. We're excited about that. We look forward to the challenges that are presented. Great non-conference schedule.

Obviously the best league in the country, great venues, very proud to be a part of this Big Ten Conference.

**Q. Between name, image and likeness and the transfer portal, what do you think will have the greatest long-term impact on college basketball?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I think the transfer portal. I think

the portal, we'll see how all of that plays out in time.

I think name, image and likeness is here. It's impactful. I'm a big fan of it. I think it's something that has been long overdue.

We'll see how that plays out, if that's sustainable for any period of time. Do think the portal is here. You're going to see years that you may have to replace seven, eight, nine different guys. I think the portal will be a very, very impactful issue for us moving forward.

**Q. You've had the luxury of having many veteran lead guards in your programs. Could you talk to us about your thoughts on turning the program over to a freshman guard.**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Yeah, it's different. Trent Frazier and Da'Monte Williams last year could run my practice as fifth-year guys. Had so much respect for those guys.

Now it's different. That leadership is going to come from different areas. I love our freshmen. I'm excited about what they bring. We've got four that I think can all help and contribute. We'll see how that manifests itself over time.

They'll need some help. There's going to be some adversity. There's going to be some speed bumps. We accept that. That's part of growth. Yet they're pretty tough-minded individuals. They're going to have to learn on the fly.

**Q. How important do you think it is for teams to have a dominant big in this league, especially as we move towards this age of positionless basketball?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I woke up every night last year knowing I had 20 and 10. That's a pretty good feeling. Obviously Kofi is unique. I think there's a lot of ways to win. I think there's things that caused us problems playing Kofi. I think you got to play against it.

I thought Iowa last year, as an example, was as good a team as there was at the end of the season. They were playing very, very small. They gave us problems.



I think it's a two-way street. I think obviously we've seen the next level, we've seen the game change at the NBA level. But, yeah, I think it can be very beneficial. They have to be good players. You can't just throw a lot of size out there that can't play.

I also look at it, and we don't have that this year, they got to come guard us on the other end, as well.

**Q. You just said you woke up every night knowing you had 20 and 10. What are you waking up every night now thinking? Do you feel you're waking up thinking, I've got different options that you can execute with?**

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Yeah, I've got a lot of different options. I don't know what those are yet. I think until we play some of that out, until we get to scrimmages and exhibition games, figure that out.

I love our personnel. I think we're as talented as we have been. It just looks different. We've got positionless size. I think that's one of the things that I enjoy. It's about taking advantage of mismatches.

We've got guys who can break you down off the dribble. I think we can be a very good shooting team. We'll have to figure all that out.

Instead of just lining up and throwing the ball to Kofi, there will have to be some different options.

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