

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Tuesday, October 11, 2022

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Northwestern Wildcats

Women's Head Coach

### Joe McKeown

KEVIN WARREN: Our next basketball coach to the podium is from Northwestern University, a coach who's had a successful run in college basketball, but especially in the Big Ten Conference.

He and his family are very involved with Autism Speaks, a national organization that creates awareness and raises money to fight autism.

Joe McKeown, the head basketball coach at Northwestern University, welcome to the podium.

JOE McKEOWN: Wait till our fight song finishes. I like that (smiling).

Thank you, Commissioner Warren. Really excited. Thanks to the Big Ten for doing this again. I thought last year we combined. It was just a great opportunity for women's basketball, too, in the Big Ten.

Excited to be in Minneapolis. Great, great, great city. I'm a homeowner here, so I'm up here all the time. I'm one of the biggest fans of Minneapolis and Minnesota, except when I play the Gophers.

One of my former coaches, Cheryl Reeve, is the head coach of the Minnesota Lynx, proud of what she did for women's basketball, basketball in the WNBA.

Great to be here and excited to come back for our tournament. Want this will be a great venue. Hopefully we'll have a great fan base for the Big Ten tournament in March.

Love our team right now. We lost one of the great generational players in Big Ten history, Veronica Burton, first round pick of the Dallas Wings. Just got done playing this weekend with USA Basketball. I gave her the ball four years ago, and she gave it back. I'd like to announce that she is coming back for a fifth year, but unfortunately that's not going to happen.

It creates opportunity for younger players, too. We brought



back two fifth-year seniors, Courtney Shaw and Sydney Wood. I'm looking at the trophies. They were part of our Big Ten championship team in 2020. They just understand. They just understand. They're helping our young players every day. Just lucky to have them, have that experience in a league where everybody's good.

Again, the other part for me, as Kevin mentioned a couple things, we're very involved in the special needs world. Appreciate people's support. It was one of the reasons that brought me to Northwestern 15 years ago. Trying to keep that torch burning with all the challenges that we face as special needs families, and as a country, too.

Again, appreciate Commissioner Warren mentioning that. Northwestern has been really supportive of me and my family as we try to do what we can in the Chicagoland community.

Again, my 40th-plus year in women's basketball. Just getting started, so really excited about my team, what we're doing at Northwestern.

Happy to take any questions.

**Q. From the time that you came into this league as a rookie coach, you're probably the last guy standing, how has the league changed?**

JOE McKEOWN: As a matter of fact, you and I talked. I was at GW. I said, I might go to Chicago and take the Northwestern job.

You said, Are you crazy?

I went from a Final Four-potential team to a team that finished last five, six years in a row.

We've seen the league grow. At that point there were 11 teams. We added Nebraska. To add Rutgers and Maryland, I just thought was great for the league. For women's basketball, you're talking about three schools that are committed at the highest level to our sport.

There's a rumor we're going to L.A., too, but I don't know



about that. I don't tan well (smiling).

I think the league right now is as good as it's been. I think there's great players. I think everybody's recruiting hard.

I think being a national league, covering the real estate that we do, you look at all the great players in the footprint of the Big Ten. Got great young coaches in the league. They challenge you every day.

I think to me it's the best league in the country right now.

**Q. You're familiar with this area. I would assume you were at the Final Four last year. Talk about what your impressions are of this area as a market for women's basketball.**

JOE McKEOWN: I was fortunate enough, I came in here seven or eight years ago, we recruited the best player, Nia Coffey, who was the Player of the Year, McDonald's All-American, Hopkins High School, won championships, led us to the NCAA tournament.

And recruiting Nia here, it's like high school basketball is so good. Then we recruited Abi Scheid from Elk River, who had another incredible career, part of our championship team.

What I learned was the opportunities young girls, how big basketball is growing up here. The coaches they get, the opportunities they get to play makes it a special place.

Then when I got in the league, we played Minnesota here at Williams, the crowds were great. Then I come over with Cheryl sometimes in the WNBA Playoffs, it was packed. Just had a great basketball vibe.

Then the Final Four this year, I don't think you could have had a better venue. So hopefully that will be that way. You can see the Wildcats in the championship game (smiling).

**Q. I know Shauna Green used to be an assistant on your staff. What did you see during that time and what do you think she can bring to Illinois?**

JOE McKEOWN: That's a great question.

Shauna Green, I'm glad she left Dayton actually because I'm the winningest coach in the history of the Atlantic-10. Trivia question (smiling).

Shauna Green was going to break all my records in a couple years. I'm glad she left for that reason (laughter).

Now we have to play her at Illinois. She's got this tremendous energy. She did a great job. I mentioned Nia Coffey. Shauna coached her. Helped me recruit Abi Scheid from Elk River. She has tremendous personality, poise. She loves the game, passionate.

I thought it was a great hire for Illinois. I'll keep you posted on that (smiling).

If I could, again, Kevin mentioned, we have Derrick Gragg who is our new athletic director with us from Northwestern. He played football at Vanderbilt, not basketball. I want to thank him for being here today at the basketball Media Day. The way he supports our family is really important to us. So thank you.

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