

Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Penn State Nittany Lions

Women's Head Coach

Carolyn Kieger



KEVIN WARREN: Next coach to the podium is from Penn State University, Carolyn Kieger. Coach has given so much back to the community in a number of ways, including participation with the Special Olympics, the United Way, the YWVA and the Pennsylvania Pink Zone.

She is also in the process of publishing a children's book that will deal with inclusion. That will come out sometime within the next year.

Coach has been a member of our equality coalition at the Big Ten Conference office. I appreciate her passion, the way she coaches her student-athletes, her leadership, but most of all I appreciate her dedication to being excellent.

So welcome to the stage the head women's basketball coach at Penn State University, Carolyn Kieger.

CAROLYN KIEGER: Good morning. Thank you, Commissioner Warren, and the Big Ten office, all the media for being here today.

I'm excited to be back home in Minneapolis. I grew up down the road in Rolesville, Minnesota. It's phenomenal to be here and be in front of all of you today.

Needless to say, there will be a lot of Kiegers in the stands come March for the tournament here, a lot of friends and family. We are thrilled the season is right around the corner.

We've been making huge strides as a program these last three years. We believe this is the year we're going to make a big turnaround.

As hard as it is to be patient during a rebuild, we know all the adversity we've been through the last three seasons will be a catalyst for our success this year.

The foundation is laid, the standard is set, the culture has been driven by our leaders. We have had a fantastic off-season in the gym and in the weight room. We know we're ready.

Makenna Marisa returns to us as one of the best guards in the country. Her development these last three years has been remarkable. And I and I know our program are excited for her to get the national recognition she deserves.

Leilani Kapinus is another All-Conference performer who returns to us as well. She's primed and ready. I believe she's not only one of the best defenders in the Big Ten but in the country.

Anna Camden has been shooting lights out for us this off-season and continues to be our captain, our leader, and our culture driver.

Johnasia Cash returns to us for her COVID year after being out this past season. We're just thrilled to have her athleticism, length, speed and competitive spirit back with our team.

We are finally ecstatic to get Alli Campbell in a Penn State uniform. She's worked extremely hard to get back to 100%. Just like the All-American she was in high school, I know she's going to do big things for us at Penn State.

In addition we welcome four transfers from our program who will be immediate impacts. Taniyah Thompson joins us as a First Teamer from East Carolina. I think she's one of the most underrated guards in the country. I'm excited for her to show her skill set at this level.

Chanaya Pinto comes to us from Oregon. Her energy and passion has been infectious.

Alexa Williamson is also a four-year transfer out of Temple whose speed is top-notch and next level.

Shay Ciezki is a freshman who comes to us to Happy Valley as a top-50 recruit. We believe she's going to have a strong freshman campaign for us.

All of these women, as well as the rest of the team, make me proud to coach them every day. They're amazing people, relentless workers, and I'm lucky to call them my family.



I love this group and I cannot wait to go to battle with them every night.

Last and most definitely not least, I want to give a shout-out to my staff. They are loyal, committed, talented and brought into Penn State. I have returning staff members who have been with me through the good and the bad times. They're my rocks. We also added four new people to the staff that I want to highlight.

Alumni Terri and Maggie Lucas come back to help bring their alma mater back to the top, to the national spotlight.

Terri played at Penn State. They were No. 1 in the country. Maggie Lucas, as we all know, is one of the best players to ever play in the league.

We have Sharnee Zoll who joins our coaching staff, one of the best point guards to ever play the game. She broke Dawn Staley's assist record. Natisha Heideman just joined our staff the last two days. Definitely no doubt family to me. I can't wait for her to have the same impact she's had on my life with our players.

We have a staff that's hungry and committed and eager to put the Lady Lions back on the top.

Q. How did that relationship develop for her to join your staff?

CAROLYN KIEGER: We've been talking for a couple years. Obviously she's going to play, work for us in the off-season of the WNBA. Phenomenal person. Like I said, she's near and dear to my heart. I know she's going to be a phenomenal mentor for our young women both on and off the court.

I love that we get her expertise. I love that we get to steal from her for the off-season. She's ready for me to put her through some workouts as well (smiling).

Q. Taniyah Thompson, you said she's one of the most underrated guards in the country. What makes her that?

CAROLYN KIEGER: She's a three-level scorer. She's explosive. She's hungry. She can defend 94 feet. She can rebound. She's got great height, great athleticism, great strength. Most importantly I think she's got a chip on her shoulder.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

