

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Monday, October 9, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Penn State Nittany Lions

Women's Head Coach

### Coach Carolyn Kieger



CAROLYN KIEGER: Good morning, everyone. I want to extend my gratitude to the Big Ten and Commissioner Petiti for hosting media day and all the folks at the Target Center for such a warm welcome.

It's always great to be back in my home state of Minnesota. I even got to steal a few hours with my parents last night, and my mom asked me if they could come today. I said it was just for press and then I realized she probably watches more Big Ten women's basketball than 99 percent of the people in here.

But thankfully she's not asking the questions today, otherwise we would all miss our flights.

It's an honor to be up here today representing Penn State Lady Lion basketball. We're thrilled to be a part of the best conference in America.

We look ahead to this upcoming season, our team is thrilled with enthusiasm, determination, and a deep commitment to represent Penn State with pride.

We have been hard at work this off-season, both on and off the court, preparing for challenges and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Our student-athletes have shown incredible dedication, and I'm excited to showcase their growth and their talents.

We have a chip on our shoulder this season, a chip to prove to ourselves, our fans, and the country that we belong among the nation's best. Every year we have been gaining momentum and getting better, and I truly believe this is our year to thrive.

I'm going to run through our entire roster because I believe this is the deepest and most balanced team I've had the pleasure to coach. This team is special. They are winners and they have a chip to prove it.

No surprise I'm going to start off with our All-Big Ten first team performer Makenna Marisa. It's a gift to have her

back for her fifth year. She's everything you could hope for in a student-athlete, and she wants nothing more than to put Penn State back in the NCAA Tournament.

I believe her dedication and loyalty to Penn State is going to pay off this season. Not only is she just 250 points shy of reaching 2,000 points, but she is also dominating the classroom and teaching the state college community.

Next we have Leilani Kapinus, who's a member of the All-Big-Ten defensive team last year, and was named to honorable mention. She led the Big Ten in steals and was eighth in the country. She is back not only to prove she's the nation's best defender, but that she can lead our team to be one of the best team defenses.

She had an incredible off-season representing USA Basketball with 3-on-3 and gained incredible knowledge for the game.

Shay Ciezki is back after a phenomenal freshman campaign. She was second in our team in scoring, and seventh in the Big Ten in field goal percentage.

She played amazing down the stretch and had an incredible summer sophomore seasons in the Big Ten.

Chanaya Pinto really started to find her stretch and her stride at the end of last season. She too had the opportunity to represent her country Mozambique this summer. She returned a different player, a different leader and a different woman.

She will no doubt be our X-factor this season.

Ali Brigham worked extremely hard since our last game. She has transformed her game in every area. After shooting 65 percent last year from the field, I have zero doubts that her hard work will be on display her senior season.

I can't say enough about the great courage of Alli Campbell she has shown over the past two years. She has dominated her recovery and looks better than ever. I can't wait to see her back on the floor with her teammates in



less than a month.

In addition to these amazing returners, our staff hit home run after home run in the transfer portal. Ashley Owusu is no stranger to the Big Ten. As an All-American on the 2021 Ann Meyers Drysdale Award winner. We are thrilled to see her back in the Big Ten representing the blue and white. She is ready to perform on the biggest stage again and make a splash.

Taylor Valladay is a full circle moment for me. I signed her Marquette before I came to Penn State, but never got the pleasure to coach her. Now in her fifth year we get to finish what we started, and I'm thrilled for the country find out the player that I always knew Taylor was.

Jayla Oden is also a former Big Ten player after having a lot of success at Illinois. She has fit in tremendously and I know her experience in the league and her ability to play in our up-tempo system is going to be the perfect addition. I'm excited to see her thrive this season.

Kylie Lavelle was a member of the CAA All-Freshman team last year for Drexel, and we expect her dominance to continue in the Big Ten.

I have recruited Grace Hall since she was a freshman in high school, and after a year at LSU and a few injuries, I'm thrilled to help reach her dreams.

And last but not least, we have freshman Moriah Murray, who is one of the best pure shooters in the country and I expect her to valuable minutes as a freshman.

I had to make sure all of our amazing women got a shout out because I believe each of them will play a vital role in our success this season.

Lastly, I want to thank the media, our administration, and my staff for being the best of the best. I can't wait to celebrate all our wins and success this season as a family.

We are...

**Q. When you were just discussing the depth of who you have on your roster, what is going to be the biggest challenge to mesh all of those pieces together, and how has that looked so far in practice?**

CAROLYN KIEGER: You know, it's a great problem to have. It really is. Our team is gelling, and their chemistry, I've been so impressed by this summer and this off-season.

They just want to win, so we've been putting a lot of

different lineups together, and every day in practice we have two teams that are going head-to-head, and I've never had that. I usually have one team that dominates, and it's going to be really fun because we're going to have a lot of depth and a lot of competitiveness.

At the end of the day, all 12 of these young ladies just want Penn State to succeed, and that's our only goal is to be back in that NCAA Tournament.

**Q. You mentioned your mother off the top, which I just absolutely love. What was the biggest lesson you learned from her that helps you in your job today?**

CAROLYN KIEGER: Wow, that's a great question. I would just say her work ethic and her unselfishness. She is one of the most unselfish human beings I've ever met in my life. I'm one of six kids, and she gave her entire life to make sure that we had the best possible experiences and opportunities, and that's my job to pay it forward for our young women now, and all she wanted was for us to thrive and be as successful as we can, and that's my goal, and that's why I do I what I do, to pay it forward and hopefully make her proud.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

