

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Monday, October 9, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Purdue Boilermakers

Women's Head Coach

## Coach Katie Gearlds



KATIE GEARLDS: Good morning. I'm not one for great opening statements but I'll give it my best shot here.

It's good to be back here. Obviously I'm a little biased to the Big Ten Tournament being in Indianapolis, but I thought Minneapolis really, really rocked it last year. The environment around the city, the fans, everywhere we walked last year was just a great place to be.

If it can't be in Indy, I'm solid with it being here.

Last year I think we took a great step for our program getting back into the tournament, albeit a play-in game. We were just excited to have that experience.

Got a good solid five back this year, then we've got two sophomore transfers out of the portal and six freshmen. Most days I think I'm crazy for having six freshmen on my team, but it's been a really fun challenge, and just a lot of great energy in our program right now.

A couple non-conference challenges, we open at UCLA. We're starting things back up with Notre Dame, so we'll play at Notre Dame, and then obviously the gauntlet of the Big Ten.

Hopefully our non-conference schedule challenges us enough to get ready for the Big Ten, but just excited to get things going.

**Q. You've got a core of Janae and Abbey and Caitlyn coming back. How have they challenged themselves to continue to climb the mountain that you started to climb last season?**

KATIE GEARLDS: Yeah, I think that it just says a lot about who they are. Both Janae and Abbey are in their fifth year. They took their COVID year, and Caitlyn is in her sixth year. Then you throw in Madison Layden, who's a senior for us, and Jayla Smith, who's a junior, those are our five core.

I think they're just hungry. I think we got a little bit of a

taste of it last year, where we want Purdue to be, and I think it starts with those five and their leadership. Their ability to lead our young people right now has just been tremendous. It makes our job easy from a coaching standpoint.

Really just kind of give them the ball and kind of let them lead the way, and as coaches we'll just try to get out of the way as much as we can.

**Q. With the six freshmen, what have you seen from your core group of five returners in terms of their leadership qualities, and I just heard you say, just get out of the way, but do you get out of the way totally when you have those six freshmen in the hands of your leaders there?**

KATIE GEARLDS: Yeah, right now, those six freshmen are in the hands of our returners, and then our assistant coaches. I get out of the way.

We actually added a couple really good pieces to our staff. Mark Stephens came over from Toledo, and then everybody knows Kelly Komara, member of the '99 National Championship team for Purdue. A lot of great energy around our program.

But the five returners make is really, really easy, but we also have six young people that really, really love Purdue and that are passionate about getting Purdue back to where we all hope it'll be one day.

**Q. As you build on the success that you had last season, what do you think the identity of your team this season will be?**

KATIE GEARLDS: I think just keep building on what we've been building, and that's just been a tough out. Being tough to beat every single night. We're chasing the likes of Iowa and Ohio State and Maryland and Indiana. We're chasing those guys.

So just making sure we're a tough out. Along the way, maybe we find an opportunity to take one of those teams out.



But we've got a long way to go to get to where those guys are, but we want to stay the course every day and just be a tough out. Really that's what we preach every day. Make sure we compete every second and be hard to beat.

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