

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Monday, October 9, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Minnesota Golden Gophers

Women's Head Coach

### Coach Dawn Plitzuweit



DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, certainly excited to be here today. What a great turnout for Big Ten media days. Of course slightly biased. It's a great city to have it in right here in Minneapolis.

In looking at last year's Big Ten Tournament from the women's side, what a great atmosphere that was here, so certainly pleased that we have a chance to continue playing here for at least another season, and hopefully that continues into the future.

Certainly with our team, we're really excited. As I was just walking in the back of the Target Center I saw a sign that said, hardhats available upon request. I think that's what our team is at this point in time. We have 14 young ladies, 10 of them are freshmen or sophomores, but in reality all of us are really freshmen this year because we're all learning a new system.

With that being said, our energy has been incredible. Our ability to learn has been very high.

A lot of people ask what is our goal in year one, and our goal is to learn to compete for long stretches and to compete throughout not only each game but each series of games to continue to get better.

It sounds a lot like coach-speak, but that's really who we are at this point in time. We are learning, and each time this is what we have to keep reminding our players as we acquire new knowledge and new skill and we become good at that skill, then it's time to change to the next thing that we have to learn and we have to get better at.

We're not at a stage where we feel great because we're always learning new things, but the good news is we have a group of young ladies who care a great deal. They care for each other a great deal, and they are working their tails off at this point in time.

**Q. You're no stranger to the NCAA Tournament the last couple years, obviously. With quite a bit of rebuilding to do with this program, what do you feel**

**like a successful year would look like, building towards that goal?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, again, I think ultimately for us it's a matter of learning how to really be competitive in all settings. When you go back and you watch our games from last year at Minnesota, we competed in stretches of games, and a lot of times during long stretches of games, and then there was a situation that maybe we changed how we do something that can help us become a little bit more resilient.

Getting those stretches, we have stretches right now where we play really good basketball, follow it up by stretches where we don't play good basketball yet. Some of that is we don't understand what that takes. Some of it is we just have to be in those situations long enough.

For us, it's a matter of continuing to compete and to continue to be resilient and to continue to get better.

**Q. You've been a coach for two decades or so, and --**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Okay, thanks.

**Q. It's a compliment. Because you've been here regionally and you're familiar with the way the conference works. Do you have an existing relationship as far as coaches go in the conference, and who do you admire in the league?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: That's a great question. There are a lot of great coaches. I've had a chance to be in the Big Ten in the past during my two-plus decades evidently of coaching.

Some of the coaches still remain the same and have done just a great job. Lisa Bluder is a great example of that. Look what she's done with her program.

I think the Big Ten is as good as Big Ten women's basketball as ever with seven teams going to the NCAA Tournament last year, so I think there are a lot of coaches that I have a great deal of respect for, a lot of players.



Lisa is probably the captain of it. Been around the longest.

Joe McKeown, someone who has been doing this a long time and who's done it in a lot of different ways. Has done a great job.

Certainly some new coaches in the league, but also Brenda Frese has done it for quite a while and has really built and established a program at Maryland.

Kevin McGuff. Knew him when he was back at Xavier, so that was quite a while ago.

And Kim Barnes Arico has done a great job.

Teri Moren, coached against each other back in out Division II days. A lot of coaches.

Amy Williams and I obviously have a relationship with both coaching at South Dakota. So quite a few coaches.

The ones I missed are the new coaches, the young coaches. They've only been doing it for like one decade or something along those lines.

**Q. Just curious what you think Mara Braun's 3-on-3 experience did for her this summer and how that can help elevate the program this year?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, we talk a lot in our program about being highly competitive and learning what that looks like. We use terms like "find a way," because there are times in a basketball game that you may have the best-laid plans -- maybe it's the greatest play of all time and it's really set up well, but a pass gets deflected or a shot is missed, and now you have to find a way to tip the ball in or come up with an offensive rebound.

In playing 3-on-3 basketball at that pace, you don't have a chance to stop competing. You have to continue through every part of that short shock clock to the next possession to the next possession.

Really for us, learning how to have that short-term memory and move on to the next play is something that we spend a lot of time working on, but it's something that she had to do in 3-on-3 basketball.

**Q. Coach, the Gophers have, I believe it's eight Minnesota players and then two from Wisconsin on their roster. Being a Wisconsin native yourself, how important is it to you to keep the best players from these two states in the area?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, it's a reason why I think this

job is an incredible job, an incredible opportunity. I think there are great players in our area, direct area here in Minnesota. Also within our region, whether that's Wisconsin, Iowa, bordering states, South Dakota potentially even. Looking into getting into Nebraska.

So we have a lot of areas that are very close to us, but ultimately having players from this area helps us in so many ways. It helps us because our young lady, Mara Braun can go compete and be over in China or got to Mongolia and come back home, and when she's home she can actually be with her family. She can come home and have a weekend to kind of get things -- get back into the rhythm and the routine and those type of things and be around her family.

You don't have an opportunity to do that if you're playing at a school that's across the country from home. Our young ladies have a couple days off, they can go spend some time with their families and they don't have to worry about getting plane and doing those type of things.

Also helps us from a fan base standpoint. If you look at, and I say this not jokingly, seriously, here the Big Ten women's basketball tournament was hosted here and was the best attended women's basketball tournament I think in the history of Big Ten women's basketball.

If you look back, what was it, two years ago, Minnesota, Minneapolis hosted the women's Final Four, it was a great, great experience.

We have women's basketball fans here. Women's basketball fans love supporting local young ladies, as well. In a lot of ways I think it really helps us to recruit and continue to recruit from our backyard and from our region.

**Q. What do you want your team to be known for?**

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Yeah, good question. I think when you look at teams, sometimes you watch them play, and you look and you try to figure out what their identity is.

I go back a couple of years in my coaching career that's relatively young, some may say, and I remember a reporter asking a question and the question was asked and answered by the reporter. The question was, what do you look for when you recruit young ladies; are you looking for versatility and toughness, and I answered with yes, those are two great qualities.

I think ultimately that's what we want to be known for. We want to be a team that is versatile in how we do things, whether that's offensively or defensively, but a team that also plays with a great deal of toughness.

