

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

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Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Wisconsin Badgers

Men's Head Coach

### Greg Gard



GREG GARD: Good morning, everyone. It's good to see everybody here kicking off another year. We're excited for what we have in Madison obviously.

I think the word I've used the most over the offseason is retention, and to have the vast majority of our nucleus back from last year, plus what we've added through the transfer portal and with our freshman class, this group has a chance to be a really, really good team.

So we're nine days into practice. Like I said, excited about what I've seen so far, and looking through the next month we have a lot of work to continue to do before we start on November 6th.

An extremely challenging nonconference schedule, and as always, this league will be -- I've been in it now 23 years. This league from top to bottom will be as good as any that there is in the country. So looking forward to that, and I know our guys are excited and ready to get this going.

Questions?

THE MODERATOR: We'll open the floor now for questions for Coach Gard.

**Q. When you talk about the retention and the pieces that you brought in, how much do you feel as though in the tight games that this conference can bring that that role of who can be that guy down the stretch in games is interchangeable for your team?**

GREG GARD: Yeah, we had 23 games last year that came down in last four or five minutes, came down to that point. Of those games, we went 13-10. Of the eight of them that we had that we lost, we had leads in that last four minutes at one point. So the experience is a big piece.

I think guys physically have matured, mentally obviously the experiences we went through last year. The depth is the biggest thing that jumps out with this team. We're deeper, bigger, more athletic than we've been in a while.

So I think all those things together put yourself in position. Obviously, you have to play the games. You have to stay injury-free for the most part, but the experience and the depth really jump out with this group.

**Q. You mentioned those last couple of minutes of games and how tight so many games were last year, and the log jam in the league standings seem to reflect that. Do you foresee there being more separation between teams this year, or what do you think ultimately separates teams when you are in a league that's as tight as the standings were last year?**

GREG GARD: Yeah, experience is a big piece of that, and I think you look at Purdue, Michigan State, ourselves have a large portion of our rosters back, so I think that gives us a head start to some degree.

But I know there's other rosters that I'll have to look up when it come time to play them because there's been so much turnover in some other places. It's just the nature that we're in right now. In college athletics there is a lot of turnover. We're fortunate that we didn't have much.

So I still think when you come down, you've been in those situations, you've been in those games, you've been in those pressure situations, and hopefully we're better not only from those experiences mentally and how to handle those situations, but physically have made a jump and are bigger, stronger, and hopefully not in those positions as long, you know, as many times as what we were a year ago.

**Q. You mentioned the close games. The portioning at the end of the games obviously led to a lot of those losses. Did you take time to diagnose that, and what did you come up with just looking at film from last year?**

GREG GARD: I think getting to the free-throw line more. In times when we were there, we didn't convert like we should or need to. The year before we had done it exceptionally well.



I think some of that's personnel, and obviously I think some of the changes in growth that have taken place with guys that are returning, and then some of the additions we've added will help us in those situations. So it's about the quality of the shots that we're getting, too.

Obviously the three has become such a predominant part of the game, so how do you utilize that more? How do you continue to have a high free-throw rate? So finding those balances.

But I think the one thing is the shot selection. And then when we were at the line, we have to convert at a higher rate than what we were able to last year.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Gard, thank you so much for your time.

GREG GARD: Thank you.

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