

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

## Iowa Hawkeyes

## Lisa Bluder

## Caitlin Clark

## Monika Czinano

### Postgame Press Conference

Iowa - 69, Purdue - 58

LISA BLUDER: What I want to do is thank our fans. I mean, they were amazing. It was Hawkeye Carver Arena North up here. It was amazing to go out there and see all the Hawkeye fans, and we're so grateful for all that support.

Obviously we needed it today. Purdue came out, gave us a great battle. We shot the ball much better in the second half. I thought Gabbie worked really, really hard on defense. I thought she did a great job for us.

We got the ball better in the paint the second half, and I thought that was good. We move on to tomorrow.

**Q. For both of you, what was it about Purdue that made them kind of such a difficult opponent?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I think in March everyone is playing with a chip on their shoulder. You don't really want to go home. Sometimes it can be to your benefit if you've already played a game on this court, and we didn't play yesterday.

But I thought they just played hard honestly. You've got to give them credit. They never backed down, especially when we went up 15 or whatever it was to start the game. They responded. They tried different defenses. They tried to slow the game down because they knew we wanted to push in transition. But the biggest thing is they played hard until the final buzzer, so you've got to give them a lot of credit for that.

MONIKA CZINANO: I've got to echo that. The first game is always kind of hard because you don't really have a lay of the court. Our shootaround wasn't here. This was



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literally our first time shooting in warmup. It's always tough like that.

Like Caitlin said, everyone gets to forget the regular season during this time and kind of find new life. So I think every team is just playing a little bit differently than they had before.

**Q. What happened there in the second quarter? Things kind of bogged down a little bit offensively.**

CAITLIN CLARK: I think that's when they went to their box and one that they started to do. I think we didn't really run and cut to spots. I think we had too many turnovers, especially in the second quarter. And then we also didn't make some shots that we do usually make.

I think overall they just kind of changed up their defense, and they made some shots, and we couldn't really push in transition as well.

But I thought we really responded in the second half. We weren't intimidated by the box and one at all. We got some easy buckets. Gabbie really stepped up and made some huge shots for us. Got to give a lot of credit to her. And I thought Monika was really good inside too when she got touches.

**Q. Caitlin, walk me through what happened on the technical.**

CAITLIN CLARK: I was just kind of frustrated, and sometimes your emotions get you, and that's what happens. But I think I responded pretty well. It is what it is. That's just how things go sometimes.

**Q. What were you able to do in the third quarter to kind of create some separation there?**

MONIKA CZINANO: I think we were really going in and out. That was really good for us. I just think we were kind of separating ourselves in the way we were really reversing the ball, kind of taking our time, pushing in transition. We were just kind of reverting more back to how we know how to play, setting the tone of the game for ourselves.



I think it was nice to just kind of get back into the swing of things.

CAITLIN CLARK: Also, I think our defense was good. 58 points, that's really good for us. So I want to give a lot of credit to our defense. I thought Gabbie was tremendous. Kate played hard. Mon played hard on the defensive end.

Holding them to 58 points when our shooting isn't always there, I think that's really good as well.

**Q. Monika, do you have a count of how many family and friends you had here? What was it like playing close to home?**

MONIKA CZINANO: I mean, it's so awesome. I'm so lucky that -- like Coach Bluder said, this is like Carver 2.0. It's really nice to have my family here. Have my last Big Ten Tournament be in this type of environment.

It's a whole lot of fun. I'm so lucky to be in the position I am truly. Thanks, family, for coming. Love you guys.

**Q. Just kind of piggy-backing off that, when you guys first found out the Big Ten Tournament was going here, did you sort of instantly maybe vision what this crowd could be like for your favor here?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think it's definitely an easier drive than Indianapolis, but when we went there the last two years, we've been in the championship game, and we still have had a lot of fans show up there. So I only knew it was going to be better.

Now, I'm not so sure I would have been expecting both sides to be all gold today, and I know it's going to be even more tomorrow. But it doesn't surprise me. The way they've supported women's basketball in my three years here and the time Mon's been here has been incredible.

So it doesn't really surprise me by any means. They're loud. They're into it. They know what's happening on the court. They're not just here because I was here. They're here to cheer this team on and watch women's basketball and be invested in it.

**Q. Caitlin, you had 12 of your 22 points in the fourth quarter. Just what changed for you there?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Most of those points came in transition. The buckets I scored, I think I honestly got the rebound on every bucket I scored and pushed in transition. To be honest, I think that's when we're at our best in transition offense. So I knew getting on the glass was super

important because they were denying me and taking me away in the half-court. I missed a few shots that I usually make. I had some open looks from three and some buckets around the rim that I usually finish.

But sometimes that's how it goes. All I could do was respond. I knew my team needed me and we needed to create some separation. So it was nice to see those two threes go down for sure. But I think the biggest thing was we got these stops on the defensive end. I got the rebound, and we pushed, and that's how I scored the ball.

**Q. Gabbie's been hitting her shot really well lately. Is there anything you've seen that's been different about her during this hot shooting streak?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I think Gabbie has always continued to work hard even when her shot is not going down. I think it's the confidence that her teammates and Coach Bluder and our coaching staff continue to pour into her.

She was the highest percentage shooter on our team last year, and we've never lost confidence in her. Over the past eight games she's shooting over 60 percent, which is pretty incredible. I'm happy for her. She continued to work. She never hung her head.

That's what we need going down the stretch, her to make big shots, but also her defense is always there for us. That's never wavered at all. But it's awesome to see her get some shots to go down because we see how hard she works and she really puts in the time.

**Q. Caitlin, I have to ask about the Grinches. What caused you to bring those out tonight?**

CAITLIN CLARK: I was kind of torn on what shoes to bring because I have so many. I don't know, I went with those. I also brought my Bruce Lee Kobes, which have been a good vibe. Hopefully I'll break those out tomorrow.

But I like the Grinches. They bring a little fire. I like them.

LISA BLUDER: Don't ask me about shoes. I didn't know what any of that meant.

**Q. Coach, my question was, what was kind of the speech at halftime to just twist the way you guys were going at it?**

LISA BLUDER: We really talked about getting the ball in the paint. I think every time we got the ball in the paint, we were scoring on in-out threes or Monika scoring. She was 6 for 7. We only had 10 paint points at halftime, and we ended up with 28. So we did a much better job of getting

in the paint the second half.

Really we talk about the second quarter, we were 2 for 10 the second quarter. That is so uncharacteristic of us. So it was -- sometimes you have to chalk things up as anomaly, and you kind of move on, right? You've just got to forget it and move on, and let's try to come out this second half and play a lot better. I thought we did, the fourth quarter especially.

**Q. Six turnovers in the second quarter, do you attribute that to nerves, or what do you think kind of led to that?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I need to watch the film and make sure I really know. I mean, I don't know if it's nerves. We have a veteran team. It shouldn't be really nerves. We did turn the ball over too many times. We only had six assists at halftime. That's not Iowa basketball at all.

We ended up with 17, so, again, we did a much better job playing our style in the second half. First half was just kind of getting our rhythm a little bit. The second quarter -- the first quarter I thought was good. The second quarter, it's kind of strange, but again, halftime came, and we fixed it.

**Q. You mentioned Gabbie in your opening statement. What has she done like tonight and the past couple games that's really helped her shot?**

LISA BLUDER: Honestly, I mean, to me, shooting is just so much confidence. It's just confidence. We just never let her doubt herself during the whole year. We were never going to tell her to stop shooting the ball. We were never going to tell her she was doing something wrong because she wasn't. It's just a confidence thing.

She's been on really well. The last seven games, I think, eight games have been amazing for her. Tonight her adjusted field goal percentage is 79 percent. I mean, that's incredible. On top of that, she's playing great defense for us. She's working so hard defensively.

So really proud of Gabbie and glad she decided to come back for another year.

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