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Caitlin Clark

Women's Basketball Press Conference



Q. What is one lesson you have learned in your time at Iowa that you will plan to use in the future?

CAITLIN CLARK: One lesson I've learned? I've learned a lot. I think first and foremost, like going into my senior year, the thing I think about is time goes so fast, and being able to soak in every single second. I think that's how I'm viewing this my senior year. I'm kind of treating it like my last. I don't know what I'm going to do going forward, and I don't want to have any regrets in that regard.

But I feel like I was just a freshman, and so I think the biggest thing is to just enjoy every single second. Because a lot of these moments are going to be some of the best moments of my life, and I get to share that with my best friends.

And Coach Bluder always said be where your feet are, so truly being able to live by that, whether I'm in class, whether I'm doing something outside of school in basketball, or if I'm here at practice or at a game, be 100 percent invested in that and give it your all. Because it goes so fast, and these are the moments you're going to want to remember forever.

Q. You built up a ton of chemistry with Monika from just a passing connection. How is that connection with Addie O'Grady, Hannah Stuelke and any of the others?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think it's definitely a work in progress. I don't think it can really be put into words how different it is to have a post and a guard combo that get three years to play with each other. If you watched me and Monika our first year, there was quite a few miscues and she wouldn't always slide to where I wanted her. She would get hit in the face with the ball, she wouldn't know if it's coming. I think it's just a work in progress.

I think the biggest thing for me that I'm trying to live by is just instilling confidence in them. They understand how great Monika was, but they don't need to be Monika. That's something we always talk about is they're going to

be different. They shouldn't be expected to be Monika. They can do things that Monika couldn't and they can't do some things that Monika could. They're just different.

But they bring a lot of really good things to this team, and I think that's the biggest thing for myself as a point guard is you just have to continue to give them the ball. If they make a mistake, if they turn it over, whatever it is, take the blame, but continue to give them the ball. Because we need our posts to be really successful, and I honestly think all three of our posts, Sharon, A.J., and Addie have been really good. And Hannah plays there at times. So they're competing every day in practice and that's all you would want.

Q. The last three years have shown that even if it's the same roster, same people, each season is kind of its own story, own identity. Along those lines, how important is it for this team to establish its own identity for this season even though some of the same players are back? Is that challenge obviously more difficult coming off of what you guys did last year?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I mean, I think that the biggest thing is getting the group to understand we don't have to be exactly who we were last year. That's not going to be a smart thing to think that we're going to accomplish because that's not how we're going to be most successful.

This is a new team, new players that are going to have new roles. Even Kate and Gabbie, they're going to have to move into more prominent roles scoring the basketball just because we lose McKenna and Monika.

Like you said, you can't expect it to be similar to last year. You don't want it to be. You want it to be different. You want it to be different for this group. Every journey is different.

I think the biggest thing I've understood playing three years is there's always ups and downs. There's always hard losses. There's always great wins. But that's basketball. That's a competitive sport.

Somebody who's a senior now really needs to be a leader and help those younger kids understand, because when you're younger, you can think the world is ending when you lose a tough game or things like that.



But really I would say last year, some of those hard losses we had at the beginning of the year, whether it's K-State or NC State, those are honestly the reason that we were a whole lot better and had hard conversations and grew as a team.

I think the biggest thing is getting this team to understand that we need to be different. We're going to be different. We don't have to be anything that we were last year, but we can still be a really, really successful basketball team.

Q. Did your foreign trip help you get a head start on what you just touched on?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, absolutely. I think more than anything it was good to spend time with each other. We spend a lot of time with each other anyway outside of basketball, but when you get to travel and do new things and experience new cultures together, that's really good. Obviously our competition wasn't tremendous, but you still get to go out there and work on things and see if it works.

We've put in a lot of different stuff this year that we think is going to help us play with a confident attitude; what your role was last year, it's going to be different this year. That's just how it has to be. Things are going to change, they have to change for us to be successful.

Q. Were you effectively trying to persuade Kate and Gabbie to come back for another year? And just in general, what are their impacts to this program?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I would say I definitely tried to persuade them. Obviously they're two of my best friends. Gabbie to me was a little bit more of a lock to come back. Kate, not so much. But Kate was probably just trying to be dramatic and wanted me to beg her so she felt better about herself.

I'm kidding.

But yeah, I think the biggest thing is Kate is a really, really good leader, and is somebody that you want on your team no matter what sport it is, no matter what age group it is, no matter male or female, she will just lead. That's the type of person she is. She attracts people to follow her.

One of the best teammates I've ever been around.

Then obviously Gabbie, one of the best shooters, but I don't think she gets enough credit for her defense. I told her she needs to be Defensive Player of the Year, and then she's not like, Nah, Caitlin, that's for you. It's your last one to get. And I just started laughing. So we joke about

that now.

But no, she's one of our -- she takes the challenge of guarding the best player every single game. And you know, the South Carolina game, for example, she doesn't score a single point, maybe shoots the ball one, two, three times -- I don't even remember exactly -- but she defended every single possession, and I think she played 38 minutes. That's just the type of player and teammate that Gabbie is. She's going to give her all. She's not going to hang her head if she doesn't get her opportunities on offense, but she's going to give everything she has on defense.

At the same time I think that needs to change this year. We have to find ways to get Gabbie the ball and get her shots because she's one of the best shooters I've ever seen as we all saw at the end of the season.

Kate, too, I think they both are going to have to take a step forward on offense and take a little bit more of a prominent role because we lose two people that gave us a lot on that side of the ball.

Q. I want to ask about the Crossover in a couple weeks, a game that doesn't even count on the record but you have 50,000 people coming to that game. How excited are you to be a part of that?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I'm super excited. Obviously a super historic event that probably will only happen once. I think we're around close to 50,000 tickets, which is tremendous, and hopefully we have a late push to get that up even higher.

But yeah, I've been checking the weather, 30-day forecasts. Are those something you should trust? I don't know. But it looks good.

No, I think on Sunday is when I'll start really watching the weather, but I'm excited.

Then obviously all the proceeds are going to the children's hospital, which is super cool, too, so it's for a really great cause.

But at the same time, it's an opportunity for us to get better. Like this is our scrimmage. We get to go out there and compete and work on things. I'm going to plan on shooting two air balls just because of the wind.

But yeah, it's incredible. I'm super excited. I think just watching Nebraska volleyball and what they were able to do. Obviously ours is going to be a little bit on a smaller level, but still, we're going to be able to break the women's

basketball record for most people at a game.

Shout-out to Coach Bluder. She was kind of the mind behind that, and obviously Beth has supported us and wanted us to accomplish something great like that.

I'm super excited, yeah. It can't come fast enough.

Q. How do you envision your role changing, if at all, this year for this team with maybe a little bit less size, more scoring?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think honestly just trying to be the same player that I was last year. A lot of the stuff that I've worked on in the offseason with Tania has been good. I think working more in the half court. Obviously we kind of know I thrive in transition offense. That's where I like to score, that's where I like to get the ball, and that's hard for the defense to guard you and pick you up there.

But in the half court just coming off a screen, setting up screens, I think I understand people are going to be physical, they're going to face guard me. And I wasn't always comfortable at times last year coming off a screen and being able to shoot the ball right away. So I think those are some of the biggest things at that I've worked on.

But also I think just being a leader. Losing Monika and McKenna, those are two huge voices we had on our team, and Kate can't do everything for us all the time. So being able to lead, to speak up, be a voice for the younger people, somebody that younger girls can lean on, because I've been through it.

I think that's the biggest area that I can grow in and continue to just lead and help this team get better in that area because I don't want Kate to have to do everything. So I think me and Gabbie can definitely step up and use our voice a little bit more.

Q. How have you been able to process all the off court things that have happened to you last in the several months?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think -- first of all, I feel like it was just April, so it's weird that I'm sitting here at this podium. But I think I've just tried to enjoy every single thing and every opportunity that I've had because they're very unique. I don't know if I'll be able to have a lot of those opportunities for the rest of my life.

Yeah, I think that's just the biggest thing is just soaking it in. It kind of takes you back for a second because I feel like I was just that young girl that was playing basketball, and I still feel like a very normal individual. But I can't

really, especially in the state of Iowa, go out in public without being recognized.

It's always only really good things, and it's cool to see people rally behind this team, whether it's just in our state, but across the country. I'll be traveling and people will even recognize me for who I am, and it's cool to see the amount of attention you brought to women's basketball and our team brought to women's basketball.

Going into this year I hope to continue to do that and show people, like, this is something you should continue to watch. And not only watch Iowa women's basketball. There's tremendous basketball all across the country. It's been that way for a while, but I'm glad they're just catching on. Yeah, I hope they stay.

Q. You're probably going to downplay this, but I'm going to try anyway. You're about 800 points away from Kelsey Plum's all-time scoring record in a career. Is that something you think about at all?

CAITLIN CLARK: I mean, I knew I was probably going to have a chance to break it, but it's not something I'm going to be, like, actively seeking out. Obviously I'm sure our coaches will tell me if I'm at a game where I get close to that number, which would probably be one of our regular season games or in conference tournament. But I think if I just continue to be the player I am and do the things I've always done, that will come.

Yeah, it's not anything -- like, I'll live just as happy a life if I never break Kelsey Plum's record. But I loved Kelsey Plum growing up. She obviously took Washington, which was a team very similar to Iowa who was really good. Had a great coach in Mike Neighbors. Had really great players and really hadn't been to the Final Four. And took a program that wasn't -- hadn't always been there, and they did it.

So she was somebody that I kind of idolized, so it's cool to kind of be in that position. She's somebody I even watch still in the WNBA as she plays for the Aces, has had a really successful career, and one of my favorite players.

So it's not something I'm counting down the numbers to at all, and if I never get there, that'll be fine. But I know it's a possibility for me this year.

Q. Coach Bluder said even with all the awards over the offseason and into the season for that matter, going into this coming year that you've stayed motivated. Is that something that's just intrinsic, is it something you have to work on?

CAITLIN CLARK: No, I think it's just kind of how I am. I hate not being in the gym. If I am not there one day, it kills me. I think it's been like really great this summer. We had our foreign trip, so we had quite a few practices, but once we got back, we didn't have as many practices.

And it was really a time where I could get better individually and ask Tania to work out a lot and work on things that I wanted to get better at, individual things that the coaches thought I could get better at. And you don't always get a ton of that time when you're trying build a new team and use practice hours and things like that.

I think that was the biggest thing for myself is I'm somebody that I love being in the gym. It's just kind of second nature to me. It's a calming thing. It's something that I'm just comfortable doing, but that's also where my confidence stems from. The time I put in in the gym, the hours working on my game, it just kind of builds my confidence up.

And when I step on the court to play a game, it's like I know I can go out there and make those shots because that's the time I spend in the gym.

Yeah, I think it's been a really unique summer for me getting extra time to work on individual things that I want to get better at, maybe more so than any other summer that I've had here.

Q. With the off-the-chart popularity that you have and the team has, this program's sold-out season, playing in a football stadium, that's going to bring on added pressure, expectations, scrutiny. How do you think you and the team will balance that if you, God forbid, lose two games in a row or something like that, on social media and what have you?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I don't think it's going to be much different from years previous. Obviously our expectations were very lofty last year, and we had a group that had played three years together, and it was like, all right, this is our final time around. To me that's about the most pressure you can get.

I understand we're going to be playing in front of a ton of fans. There's more eyes on us, more than ever. But there might be a few learning experiences for this team. There's people that are going to play that haven't really got those minutes or been in end-of-game situations.

So like I said earlier, I think the biggest thing is being a voice in the locker room to help them understand our season is not made or broken by one win or loss. When I was a freshman, I probably thought it was. But I think

understanding now that's not really how it goes.

Yeah, I think Coach Bluder always said pressure is a privilege, and that's something that you welcome. I wouldn't want it any other way. The girls in the locker room wouldn't want it any other way. We want to be ranked in the top 10. We want a sold-out arena. We want fans on the road booing us. That's what a competitor wants.

You welcome it. You enjoy it. At the end of the day, you understand like this is special. Don't be afraid of it. Don't run away from it. Just enjoy it and soak it in, because no other Iowa women's basketball team in history has had an opportunity to be in an environment like this.

So I'm just going to try to enjoy it, and if we lose a game we should have won, I know our world is not going to be broken. It's just you come back the next day and get better and hopefully lead this team to a lot of success at the end of the year.

Q. Do you have a pregame ritual, and if so, what is it?

CAITLIN CLARK: Not really. I mean, we all kind of just do the same routine. We eat four hours before a game, come back two hours before, and then kind of just get ready and go. I don't really do anything crazy, no.

Q. Did you watch the Nebraska volleyball game?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I did.

Q. What was going through your mind when you watched that unfold?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, well, I was like, first of all, this counts towards their actual record. I'm not sure I would sign up for a basketball game if it counted for my actual record outside.

But no, I thought it was incredible. I've always been a fan of Nebraska volleyball. I think what they do is incredible. I think they sell out basically every game. They're always ranked in the top 5. But they're also playing Nebraska-Omaha, so it was just a win for the state of Nebraska. My mom actually graduated from there, so I have a lot of family from there.

Yeah, I think it's cool. It shows how excited people are about women's sports in general. It doesn't only have to be basketball, doesn't only have to be volleyball, softball, whatever it is. It's just super cool.

I can't imagine those girls' feelings when they walked out of the tunnel to 90,000 or whatever it was, 90,000 plus people

screaming for them. I just know that had to be one of the coolest feelings.

I know me and Coach Raina were texting during the whole thing. We're, like, Man, this is so cool. But Scotty McCreery was performing after, so we're like, We've got to bring somebody to Kinnick. We have to get it done. Breaking news, we haven't.

But no, so it was just super cool and I'm a fan of women's sports, so it was fun to watch.

Q. Who would you want to perform?

CAITLIN CLARK: Oh, geez. There would be a lot of people. Taylor Swift, yeah. I don't think that's on her bucket list right now. I don't know. A lot of people. I would sign up for anything. Travis Scott, that would probably be an insane show. There would be a lot of people.

Q. I know you said you expect two airballs during the game outside. How are you and the rest of the team preparing to play in Kinnick?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, there's nothing you can really do to prepare for it. I guess the depth perception will be kind of weird, I'm guessing. But honestly, when you play in some of those arenas -- like I don't know. I think back to my freshman year when we played inside of the Alamodome or whatever it is in San Antonio. The depth perception was really weird, but once you get in the flow of the game, it's not something you're thinking about all the time.

Then obviously you can't really factor in for outside. I'm not going to go and work out at a park. I'm just not going to do that. But we are going to take a shootaround in the morning before. So it will be nice to get out there and be able to shoot around and kind of see the environment, so when we go out and scrimmage, we're not going to be completely blind. We're going to have some sort of feel for the court and what it's like.

Yeah, the depth perception when you first walk in an arena can be a little different, but once the game starts flowing, it's not really something that you think about too much.

Q. Talk about your individual legacy; I know you've been an advocate for women's sports basically since you started playing. How important is it for you just to be the face of trying to push women's college basketball forward and being a part of a team that really has elevated women's college basketball?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think it's really cool, and it's

something that I enjoy. It's not anything I shy away from.

If I have to be the face of women's basketball or women's college basketball, I think that's a really good thing. I think that's cool. I think it's something that's only going to help the game grow more. It's not anything that I feel comes with a lot of pressure.

I think it's just this has come because of the way you've played basketball and the way you've carried yourself, so just continue to be you. I think that's the coolest thing.

Coach Bluder has allowed me to thrive and be who I am. That's one of the reasons I came to Iowa is because, one, the offense we run is perfectly set to the type of player that I am, and she doesn't handcuff me to running a play every single time down the floor or being somebody that I'm not. She lets all five girls that are on the court at one time just be them.

I think that's been the biggest thing for me to be successful is I've just been myself, whether that's playing with emotion or shooting shots that maybe some people don't love, or I don't know, celebrating on the bench. Coach Bluder just allows us to be ourselves, and that's I think another reason why people are attracted to supporting our team is because they can see the emotion and passion and love that we have for one another, and that's a really fun thing to support.

Q. What does Kate Martin mean to you as a friend?

CAITLIN CLARK: Oh, Kate is awesome. I'm going to try to figure out a way to get her back for her seventh year if I come back because I don't want to have to come back if she's not here.

But like I said, I'm going to treat this like it is my last year. But Kate is just an incredible individual. She's somebody that will always reach out to you if you have something going on, and honestly, if you never tell her you have something going on, she's going to figure it out herself because she just has that leadership instinct inside of her.

She's probably the best leader I've ever been around in my entire life, maybe will be the best leader I've ever been around for my entire life.

She has every single person's back on this team, no matter if she's your best friend off the court, no matter if you don't really talk off the court. She's going to have your back every single day.

The thing about Kate is she's competitively wired just like I am, so me and Kate can get into it, but that's what I love

about her is like we'll butt heads a little bit and compete when we scrimmage, but at the end of the day, we're going to go in the locker room and joke with each other and have fun. That's the type of teammate that she is, and how much fun she is to play with is because she's just as competitive as I am.

There was this clip going around where when I would get feisty, Kate would be the first one to be there and have my back, which was really funny. But no, she's tremendous, and I'm lucky enough to have convinced her to come back for her last year, and I will work on finding a way to get her back for another year if I'm here, too.

Q. What will be your decision-making process as to whether or not you decide to come back for year five or you'll be the first pick in the WNBA draft?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I guess the biggest thing for myself is just I'm going to go based off of my gut at the end of the day. I think that's the biggest thing I should trust is I'm going to know when I need to know if I want to stay or if I want to go, and I think it was very similar to my college decision. It feels weird, I feel like I'm in like the recruiting process in a way again, but to a lower extent.

But I feel like it's not something that that I think about every single day. It's not something that I let weigh on me. It's like I'm focused on helping this team be the best team they can be, and when I know that decision, all of you will know.

I think the biggest thing is I'm just going to trust my gut. I'm not going to do research on what's better and all this stuff and find data. I'm just going to trust my gut and go with that.

I think that's the most telling thing, and that was the most telling thing for me in my recruiting process. I know there was a lot of really good options, but in my heart I wanted to be here and that's why I selected this place. I think it's going to be the same when I make the decision to stay here or leave.

Q. What have you seen from the other guards around you on this team? Who have you seen step up at the guard position this summer? Is there anyone in particular that you've really felt like has made a big jump?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think honestly, everybody is playing really well. It stinks because it's hard to find minutes for 13, 14 girls.

But I think Molly has done a really good job. She's just playing with a different confidence level that maybe she

didn't have at times last year.

But I also think she understands we lost a lot of people that scored a lot of points. She needs to go into the game with a mindset of yeah, I can score the ball, and she's one of those people that puts in a lot of time in the gym.

I just tell her, trust that work; like, you're really good. Everybody always tells her, don't pass up shots, shoot the ball, you're really good. I would say Molly and Taylor are shooting it really well, and I think Kylie is coming back really well, too. Obviously it's very hard to come back from an injury like that, and I think just helping build her confidence back up because she's shooting the ball really well, she's moving really well. She seems like she's pretty confident on that leg.

Those are the people that you just need to continue to pump confidence into because we're going to need them.

Q. Is there one thing you wanted to get better at this year?

CAITLIN CLARK: I think there's a lot of things I can be better at. I think the biggest thing, turnover-wise, I can still cut down on those numbers. I think that'll be important, whether I -- whenever I decide to move on, like that's something at the professional level, like I can't average three turnovers a game. That's just not a realistic thought.

I think also, like I talked about earlier, I wanted to get better at shooting off of screens and being more comfortable getting my feet set and getting shots off, and I think that can also translate to the next level when I decide to go is I might not play with the ball in my hands for 40 minutes. That might not be how it's going to be. I might be playing the 2. I might be playing the 3. So I need to be comfortable moving without the ball and getting my feet set and being able to get my shot off, so I think that's another thing I worked on.

Then just in practices working hard defensively. I still think that's something I can get better at and something I try to work really hard at when we're working on them in practice, whether it's one-on-one, whether it's close-outs, whether it's 5-on-5. I think it's something that I can continue to develop.

Q. Coach Bluder said that she's most proud of all your accomplishments of your academic accomplishments. How were you able to achieve the high standards off the court, if not higher than what you have on the court?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think honestly it just speaks to

the way I was raised. My parents always made sure my schoolwork was done before I went to basketball practice, before I went to soccer practice. I wasn't going to be able to play sports if I didn't have good grades. And I think it also just speaks to my competitive spirit.

I'm wired in the way where I want to complete my schoolwork to the best of my ability. I want to be the best in the classroom. At times I wish I wasn't that way because I wouldn't try so hard and I wouldn't care as much, but that's just how I am. And those awards sometimes get buried below everything else, but they're super cool, and I think it speaks to the full embodiment of a student-athlete and what you have to do to be at your best every single day.

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