

University of Iowa Basketball Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Barbara Wilson

Beth Goetz

Ben McCollum

Men's Basketball Press Conference



I want to first recognize Ben's family, his wife, Michelle; their kids, Peyton, Tate and Grace, and his mom Mary. We are thrilled to have your family be a part of ours.

As quickly as I became convinced that Ben was the guy we were looking for -- I think it was the time with the family that sealed the deal -- your team at home is certainly as wonderful as your team in the locker room.

A shout out to our amazing students who are here in a show of support and my gratitude to our alums, fans and generous supporters whose passion allows us to build programs that inspire, excite and make you proud to be a Hawkeye.

Ben has an exceptional mind for the game, a relentless competitiveness, a commitment for truly developing young men on the court and off.

I first spoke with Ben almost four years ago in another search at a different moment in his journey and mine, but the same things being shared about him then, about his ability to build culture and success. Before his name was known outside smaller coaching circles, people were taking notice of what he was able to achieve on the court and the way he was going about it. It was impressive then, and it's well known now.

We can talk about the numbers, and who else, regardless of sport, holds a winning percentage of over 80 percent, his 12 straight conference titles, the four national championships, the 31-4 season with a program in transition, the list of household names from successful coaches like Shaka Smart, Buzz Williams to Grant McCasland that call him for advice to help identify gaps in their system, an efficient offense that empowers athletes to be creative and looking for opportunity coupled with a suffocating defense.

Ben is an outstanding coach and has an innate ability to identify and develop talent. He sets high standards for his teams and tailors his system to meet the strengths of his athletes.

Ben was born right here in Iowa City, and both he and Michelle called Storm Lake home. Ben idolized Chris Street, attended Hawkeye basketball camps, and he can

BARBARA WILSON: Thanks, everyone, and thanks to Athletics for the little step up. I'm always appreciative of the height adjustments that I need.

This is an exciting day for the University of Iowa. We are so thrilled to be welcoming Ben and Michelle and their children. I don't know if we call them children still. Young adults and children. Just a great, great moment for us.

I've talked with Ben. I've talked with Michelle. They're excited about joining the Hawkeye family. They are bringing with them some great attributes that are so consistent with what we care about here at the University of Iowa. Laser focused on the student-athlete and the success of their academic pursuits, an incredible commitment to community; and we all know that's what the Hawkeyes are about; and, of course, a desire to elevate the fanbase and elevate the University of Iowa across the country, and maybe even across the world. I don't know. We'll throw that in there as a little challenge.

So it is a great day today. Very excited. Please give Ben a big welcome and a "go Hawks." Thank you. (Applause).

BETH GOETZ: Well, thank you, President Wilson. We are so grateful for your continued leadership, support of our students, and your engagement in this process that ensured we find the right leader for the Hawkeyes.

I also have to share my gratitude with the team that worked alongside me in this process. They are absolutely the best.

It's truly a special day for Hawkeye men's basketball and the start of a new opportunity to build on tradition, inspire success and ignite the passion of the loyal black and gold.

First, let me thank you all for being here today to help me welcome Head Coach Ben McCollum.



... when all is said, we're done.®

list almost every Hawkeye starter for the last three-plus decades. And he even accompanied his mom, as I understand it, to law school right here on our own campus.

Ben has roots here, and to be sure, that's a special part of this story, but not why I thought Ben was the perfect leader for this program.

Coach McCollum is a proven winner, and a teacher of the game. He creates teams that are defined by their hard work and culture.

In the short time I have gotten to know him, he is a person of character, a man with values that align with those we hold so close. He is committed to developing his athletes to reach peak performance on the court, but more importantly, prepare them for a lifelong success outside of sport.

I am confident that under Ben's leadership, he will add to the legacy of teams and athletes that imbed themselves in the memories of this loyal Hawkeye fanbase.

Stay in the moment, Coach, enjoy the process and know that the Hawkeye Nation is going to be behind you the whole way.

Please join me in officially welcoming Coach Ben McCollum. (Applause).

BEN MCCOLLUM: Love the ties. Look great. You wear those for games? Good.

Hey, thanks a lot, first off, for everybody attending. Thanks to the Hawk's Nest for the cheers out there. We taught them, you know, hey, we can't just clap. We gotta stand up, we gotta get it lit. So we gotta make sure we do that at games in Carver.

First off, I want to thank Beth for taking the chance on me essentially and giving me opportunity to come home to the University of Iowa. You know, Iowa City, I was born here; I lived here for four, five, six years of my life and have cheered for the Hawkeyes for a long time, and now I get to be a part of their success, and I couldn't be more excited. My family is excited. And we want to bring this back to the championship culture that we think we can build here at the University of Iowa.

I also want to thank President Wilson. I was fortunate to kind of meet her via Zoom for a split second, and she happened to turn the camera around and she had a bunch of fishing poles. Her husband is a fisherman, so hopefully he'll take me fishing. But I certainly appreciate her allowing Beth to come out and hire the coach that she wanted and

be patient with that process as well.

My family, my wife -- you know, a long time ago I got into this profession, I actually went to school to get a finance degree and was supposed to go to Kansas City to work with my wife, and at the time we were engaged, and I can remember I had a semester left, and she had moved to Kansas City to be with me. And I called her about, oh, I was probably about a month into that first semester, or the last semester of school, and I said, man, I don't know if I want to go into the financial world. I think I want to be a coach.

Oh, really? She said, so you're not moving to Kansas City right now?

I said, nah, I think I want to coach.

She goes, okay, well, as long as it's your passion. So I spent two more years as a graduate assistant. But she stuck with me through all that, and look where we're at now. And she's been a big part of that.

My three kids, obviously, Peyton, Tate and Grace, this has been a long journey. Coaching is a very difficult profession, and it's very difficult on your families, but it's very rewarding on top of it. And they've stuck with it. Obviously a second move in a year, and I couldn't appreciate them more. So thank you to my family.

Specific to the past schools that I had, Drake University, obviously I came from there. Brian Hardin gave me my first chance at the Division I level, and I'm forever grateful to Drake and everything that they've done, the fans, the support. I felt like we poured our heart into that place.

Northwest Missouri State gave me my start, Dr. Bob Boerigter and all the people there that really supported everything in our journey. So thankful for them as well.

Also, to the people of the past that have grown the program. I grew up in the Tom Davis days when they used to press, get up and down. You saw Chris Street on the ball flying around. They'd get steals, and I can rattle off half their teams' names, and going to Hawkeye camps.

There's a lot of great coaches that have helped grow this: Lute Olson, Tom Davis, obviously George Raveling and Fran McCaffery on top of that. So I certainly appreciate everything they've done for the University of Iowa, and hopefully it's in good hands right now and we can bring championships to the University of Iowa and Hawkeye Nation.

To the past players, you're who I idolized. I mean, that's



who I watched growing up was the past players for the University of Iowa, all the way back from B.J. Armstrong. I could rattle off -- I'm just like, Wade Lookingbill, Val Barnes, Mon'Ter Glasper. These are just the random names. Acie Earl, obviously Chris Street. So I can just rattle off a bunch of them and obviously the ones that just came.

I always dreamed of playing for the Hawkeyes, and I just wasn't good enough. So I didn't get to play for them, but now I get to coach them and hopefully bring success here.

How are our teams going to look? You know, I was just talking to -- I think I was talking to Beth, and I recall, it's vivid in my mind, and most of you have seen it, I grew up seeing it, and have you ever seen Chris Street play? Like just with the intensity, the energy, the effort, the enthusiasm, the joy, the servant mentality, the toughness. Everything that Iowa stands for is what our team is going to look like.

From an Xs and Os standpoint, obviously I think we'll be good there, too, but most importantly, when you watch our team and we go on the road in the Big Ten or we go on the road to other games, I want you to be proud of how our kids act, how they compete, how they love each other, how they serve each other. That, to me, has still and will remain the most important thing.

My objective is to make better husbands, better fathers, better citizens, and that's what I'll do here at the University of Iowa through the game of basketball and try to make the State of Iowa proud.

In taking this job, I've always felt like you needed to take a job that you can win championships and compete for them on a consistent level. Beth Goetz has given me that opportunity and given resources to make sure that we can do just that, and that's our goal is to get Carver-Hawkeye Arena filled back up, to create an environment where other fans want to come and to be the best venue in the State of Iowa. And we're going to fight for that. We're going to compete for that. We've done that at other schools, and hopefully we can do that here.

We do need everyone else. So when we walk in and we see the Hawk's Nest, I appreciate everyone that came. We want even more, and we want it louder, and we want you to be a part of building this thing.

Just myself, just a few players, just a few coaches, that's not what it takes. It takes everybody in here. It takes everybody in Iowa City. It takes everybody in the State of Iowa. And we want you to be a part of that build, and we want to fight for that every single day, and we want to see

you out supporting.

One thing we can start with -- I don't see a ton of the players -- is see if we can get Pryce, Cooper, Josh, see if we can get them some support as well, maybe just text them or tweet them or anything like that and get them excited about coming back to the University of Iowa and making this thing grow. That would be good support to start.

We want to create that home court advantage, which is something that we have done before. We want to do that here and create a level of excitement for everybody at Iowa and get it to what I remember when I walked into Carver, and again, loud, full crowds and get it to that point.

Again, I'm blessed, man. I appreciate everything. I appreciate the people that have taken a risk on me. I'm thankful for that every single day. I'll make sure to not take this for granted. I'm going to fight for Iowa, and we're going to get this thing going again. (Applause).

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask you about how you're going to build this team. What did you learn last year from having to build from scratch the lessons of portaling, and what did you learn positively and negatively from that experience?

BEN McCOLLUM: Positively first, tough kids win. Connected groups win. Groups that serve each other win. Kids that work with a level of humility win. And that hasn't changed. So with the portal you have to make sure you can identify those intangible talents very early, because the physical gifts are pretty easy to identify.

But as you see throughout the portal, some of the teams that may spend the most money or on paper may have the most talent don't necessarily win because they're not a connected group.

So for us what I've learned from Drake is that don't overthink, just because somebody is getting a lot of money here, that he's a better fit for what you do. And so we continue to trust our own eyes at Drake, took people that we thought could really help build and sustain a culture so that we can continue success into the future.

Here at Iowa, same concept. I think it's obviously at a higher level. You do have to take certain transfers, but again, that goes with Hawkeyes making sure that we try to retain some of the kids that are wanting to go into the portal right now and do it quickly.

And, again, so I've said, it takes everybody. It takes everybody to get those kids back. Like that's what it's



going to take, and that's what we want, because they're tough kids and they're Iowa and they'll be great for us.

You know, it's the same thing that I learned at Northwest Missouri State. You can't complicate winning. Like it is what it is. It's the same thing, kids that serve each other love each other.

Q. I wanted to ask you about how Steve Tappmeyer shaped you as a coach in your coaching philosophy and what you took away from him when you played for him at Northwest Missouri State and maybe what you learned about leadership from Mel Tjeerdsma when you worked under him when he was the athletic director and football coach at Northwest Missouri State?

BEN McCOLLUM: Yeah, a lot of people don't know those names here, but those with DII legends right there.

Coach Tappmeyer, I played for him. It was funny -- I played for a guy at NIACC, and I should have mentioned his name. He's one of the only players to ever play a Final Four with two different teams. Does anybody know the answer to that? Yeah, Special K, Steve Kraficisin. So I played for him at junior college. Awesome coach. Went to Northwest Missouri State -- this will answer your question -- Steve Tappmeyer. And I walked in -- I always was like second and third place my whole career. Couldn't get to first. And I'm like, man, I'm close, I'm close. I just couldn't get over that hump.

I walked into one of their weight sessions and conditioning sessions, and I'm looking around, and I'm like, this is first place. This is what it feels like. And he taught me the shocking difference between first and second. And he goes, second to tenth, it's right there. But first place cultures and first place people are way up here. And he taught me the culture. He taught me how to be ready every single day. And from an Xs and Os standpoint, defensively, he taught me that, and he remains a mentor as well.

Mel Tjeerdsma, he won a lot of national titles in football, and from a leadership perspective -- but I remember one day he came in and I said, man, I'm really having trouble with this, and I had a lot of anxiety about it, and a young coach. And he goes, ah, don't really worry about it. I said, you're not really worried about it? Are you crazy?

He said, hey, let me tell you something, Ben. We are both wired differently. It doesn't make you any better or worse than me. So it was kind of profound advice that, hey, the way you do things is the way you need to continue to do things. Just because I'm this way doesn't mean you should

be that way. So both of them have had a big impact on my career.

Q. Ben, regarding the way you guys played this year, I know it's been different with all your teams regarding how you approach tempo and such like that, but what I'm curious about is how you get players to buy in to playing good defense, but also not high tempo? I mean a lot of teams like to emphasize tempo maybe as opposed to efficiency, like I know is important for you.

BEN McCOLLUM: So efficiency is number one. I think from an offensive perspective, you want to be efficient. Why do you want to be efficient? Because you can set your defense.

So if I put the ball in the basket more times and you have to take it out of bounds, I can set my defense. If I take a good shot and get you in rotation, I can get an offensive rebound.

So shot selection and the ability to get quality shots equals efficiency, which allows your defense to set, which allows you to play good defense.

Why this year we didn't have the shooting that our teams at Northwest Missouri State had. So, for instance, some of those teams would have five guys on the floor at a time that were 40-plus percent and one or two that could shoot 50 percent, from three. And so from an efficiency perspective, we were always top five in the country at all levels consistently.

Do we want to play slow? You know, slow to me is low-possession games would be better, because it's popping, it's moving. We just didn't have enough shooting to get a good shot that quick. But I tell you what we did win. I would say the greatest plaque that NCAA used to send you these statistics plaques. They'd used to send you like effective field goal percentage, fewest turnovers and these big plaques, and one year I got the greatest plaque of all, and it was a plaque of "led the NCAA in wins." That's what I always felt like you should coach your team to is trying to win.

But from an offensive perspective, yeah, I would prefer to play faster. I would say probably middle of the pack is usually where our teams would sit.

But we're going to make sure that we play the best way that our personnel has success, and that's just what it was this year. But we'll always play defense. Yeah.

Q. I read that you were impressed by "The Art of War" and that you're a big believer in imposing your will. If



that's so, could you expound on that?

BEN McCOLLUM: That's a deep question. It is. Impose your will is every program that we've had is our motto. I think our first or second year at Northwest I had these huge packets. It actually was stolen from a team in the Big Ten -- I won't name names -- from their football program. And I thought, man, this is like all this cool stuff.

And I kind of realized about two seasons in that they weren't paying attention to any of it because it was just too much information. So I'm like, what's my favorite, like what can permeate the whole program. So we just put one sheet in their little binders, and it was "impose your will." And so our intention is to impose your will on everything that we do. So defensively we want to tell you what to do. Offensively we'll try to tell the defense what to do.

And so, more importantly, though, imposing your will also trends towards like an official's call. So if I get upset with an official making a bad call, right, that call is imposing its will on me. But if I continue to play and move on to the next play, now I'm imposing my will on that call and just continuing to that next play.

And so we try to have it permeate our whole program. It's just an attack mentality, creates that level of urgency that we need. And in the weight room, impose your will on those weights. In conditioning impose your will in that. And that's us -- it's not a bully mentality because we say bully the bullies, but it's impose your will, the short version.

Q. I want to ask you about scheduling. So obviously first time at a high major program. What is your approach to nonconference scheduling, November tournaments, and then having coached at Drake for a year, is there any interest in resuming the UNI-Drake rivalries?

BEN McCOLLUM: Good question. I would say scheduling wise, you want to put yourself in the best position, one, to have your team be at their best in March. So if you need -- that specific team, if they need to play a top-tier team, then you schedule that. If you need to play a bunch of teams that are not quite as good to build confidence, then you do that. So you schedule with that in mind first.

The second part of that is you need to schedule to make the NCAA Tournament. So obviously there's the net rankings, and there's a lot of mathematics that go into that. Obviously your Quad 4s is, you beat a bunch of Quad 4s by a lot of points, going on the road versus a Quad 3 or Quad 2 doesn't make a lot of sense just from an analytic standpoint to be able to make that NCAA Tournament.

Specific to Drake or UNI, good question. I don't know on that. It probably depends on if that allows us to make the NCAA Tournament better.

Now, there are some unique situations that you will play, just because it's fun for the fans, and that might be number three as well. I'm not afraid of those either.

Q. You mentioned some of the transfers that are in the portal right now. I'm curious to know if you've made contact with any of those and what your confidence level is about getting those guys to return to the team?

BEN McCOLLUM: I have. Depends on if we can get some of these Hawkeyes on them, too. I think we just need to make them understand that it is home and that we're coming back out to support them and we're going to fight for it.

How cool would it be for some of them to be a part of -- obviously they finished towards the bottom, but now moving up towards the top, and they're the reason for the change. Like that to me is as cool as it gets. And that's our sell to them. And we're going to continue down that path, and we're going to fight for them to maintain and be, because they're loved here. We love our Hawkeyes. We love Iowa. And we want them to stay. I feel like it's going good, but I don't know. We'll find out here.

Q. I know you got the sport coat on right now, but typically on the court you're going dress shirt and tie. Could you remind me why that's the choice of fashion for you? And just seemed like it was a medium for you to connect with the fanbase at Drake. So how did that all come together?

BEN McCOLLUM: I used to wear different colored ties and shirts and pants, and then I realized I was terrible at matching. So I went to the white shirt and tie. And then when everyone else kind of went to the like casual look, I always thought in every other profession and like our level of coaches, we make a lot of money, right? And other people in professions have to dress with a level of professionalism. And I'm not saying other coaches are unprofessional, because my assistants don't wear that, and I think they're very professional. But I've always thought that that's what I needed to wear to act like a pro; and just my thought, my theory. Just because everybody else has to do the same thing that's in other professions. That's why I do it. And then it just becomes comfortable, and then you get superstitious. Then you wear the same color every day and then it's a problem. But, yeah, it looks good.

Q. For players who weren't on the Iowa roster that are in the portal right now, what's your recruitment pitch to



them?

BEN McCOLLUM: You know, one, it's the University of Iowa. Like I think it's a big deal. I think it's pretty cool to be here. I love the campus. I love everything surrounding it. I love the support. I love the fans. I've been around it my whole life. So you sell that, number one.

Two, the relationships that we're going to have with them is a big deal. So we sell the people. So we'll sell the people that -- my assistants, my staff. We'll sell anyone that's in the program at that point.

And, three, just making sure that they understand we've won a lot, and if you want to be infected with some of those winning characteristics that we can bring to the table, this is where you should be. And if you want to go somewhere else for a certain amount of whatever, then go do that. But we're going to make you better.

The last thing is with our recruiting pitches, I always tell kids, like don't necessarily go to the school that always wants you the most -- and this may not make sense -- meaning some schools recruit differently than others, some people just surround the kids and they're just like I want you, I want you, I want you. Well, you want them for their "talent," which, yeah, that's true. There's certain people that I want for their talent as well. But, more importantly, I want them because I see their talent, and I feel like we can make it that much better. So choose a school that does the most for you. And Iowa offers that with our coaching, with the university itself. Like we can change kids' lives. And so we want them to choose, essentially selfishly, by coming to the University of Iowa.

Q. I know you were pretty deliberate in waiting to make the move to Drake last year in Division I. I'm wondering if there is anything that you learned about yourself in your one year at the Division I level.

BEN McCOLLUM: I've learned that I could move. Our family did, from a personal perspective. I think it was really difficult when you put roots in the ground at Northwest Missouri State, have a lot of success there; I felt like I continued to give to that community consistently.

From a Division I perspective, what did we learn? The same thing wins. It is. It's the connectivity of your group. It's toughness. It's all those things. We didn't win a lot of warmup contests. A couple of the kids that started probably couldn't even dunk. They could actually. But I like to make fun of them. But we were the most connected group out there. We were the toughest group, and we were able to win basketball games.

So I learned quite a bit, and a lot of it was just making -- it was just me understanding that that does still happen at these levels, right, at Drake. It's not like we have to get this earth-shattering -- yeah, you need talented. I got talented guys. But it doesn't need to be earth shattering and does every position need to be the same in regards to talent? No. You need connectivity, toughness and great kids.

Q. You've touched on it a little bit, but what's your vision for what you want to build this program to be?

BEN McCOLLUM: I mean your objective is to win championships. Like the reason like we went to Drake was because we felt like we had an opportunity to win the Missouri Valley Conference Championship and get to the NCAA Tournament. We felt like they were resourced enough to be able to do that, and it was important through the conversations with Beth that she was on the same page as me. And she might have even been on a further page ahead in regards to wanting to bring championships here.

So that's obviously what we're trying to build. I would like to see a full Carver. Like I would like to see fans out there. I've seen full at other sports. I want to make sure that we put a good product out there so that fans enjoy it and we show what Iowa is like.

So that would be my vision, similar to what we did at Northwest Missouri State for that 15 years, build it into that kind of contender.

Q. Regarding your staff, are you planning on bringing guys from Drake and then filling in the gaps or what are you thinking as far as approaching that?

BEN McCOLLUM: Yeah. We'll bring a few from Drake. A lot of the guys played for me -- I think three of them played for me actually. One of them was my first recruit ever. He wasn't very good, though (laughs). He's here. So I want to make sure that he knows that. Still can't play. But he's got great energy.

You know, staff, I always tell people that the best way to hire a staff -- and Grant McCasland, one of my good friends, told me this. He said, here's how you hire your staff. Find guys that you want to do life with, and usually it's going to work out pretty good. And what that means is just get good people, and if you surround yourself with enough good people, other people want to join as well. So we'll get the best of the best people.

Obviously for the Power Four level we need to make sure that we have a certain skill set as well, which we'll get. And then there's your video guy and stuff like that. But we just



want great people and guys that we want to do life with. So to answer your question, yes, and then we'll fill in a couple as well.

Q. You mentioned you want a full Carver, and it's been a while since Carver was consistently full. Obviously bringing in a quality and a good program will bring up the attendance, but is there anything externally that you are thinking about doing or wanting to do in the summer and the fall to help facilitate that beyond what's going on on the court?

BEN McCOLLUM: Yeah. We're going to connect. Like our players are going to connect with the students. I need to connect with the students, and our whole program does.

Again, though, it's not us uplifting this program. It's the whole university. It's the students helping as well, and it's the community of Iowa City as well. It's former players. You know, some of these former players are, again, they were my idols growing up. Like the NBA I didn't watch. I watched the Iowa Hawkeyes. Like those are my guys. And getting them involved, too, and just creating this awesome environment like that throughout the summer, and just you gotta be out, man. It's Iowa. Like you gotta shake hands. You gotta -- when you're in the grocery store and they come up to you, you gotta say "hi." Like, what do they say, Iowa nice? It's God's country, as we say. So just do little things like that, and I think it goes a long way.

Q. It was reported that Ben Stirtz is going to follow you here. You know a little bit about the Hawkeye culture. I just want you to explain why he fits the Iowa culture and what he can do for this program?

BEN McCOLLUM: If that happens, why would those guys fit? Specific to Ben, I mean, he's probably, if he's not the best point guard in the country, he's top two or three. So that's pretty good fit right there.

All the guys that we've had operate with a level of humility, meaning they're able to be coached at a high level. They don't think they're bigger than the program itself. They understand the value of other people, and that allows to have elite amount of success. And obviously they're good basketball players as well.

But for him specifically, more importantly, is his level of humility. And the other guys that I coached at Drake, exact same. Like just they're humble people that want to serve and want to grow and get better.

Q. Coach, we've heard other coaches describe you as just like a relentless worker, competitive. Where does that come from? Is that some way that you would

describe yourself as just uber competitive?

BEN McCOLLUM: Yeah. I would say I was probably the kid that had the temper tantrums when I was in grade school because you lose a game and you wouldn't shake hands and stuff like that.

No, I find I'm just a fighter. That's what I've always thought. I've always been competitive, and I always want to find a way to be relentless enough to take it a little bit further.

I think it probably comes from my upbringing; just my mom, my grandparents, my stepdad, you know, just growing up in that environment, I was never really allowed to be a victim. You know, you would always try to control your own circumstances, and you'd always have to fight. And I learned that just being around my family, essentially, and how much fight they have.

You know, it's interesting, one of the Northwest Iowa camps -- they used to come to Storm Lake -- and Jerry Strom used to put them on, and he was the best. But one year, it was my first year that I went, I think it was like fourth or fifth grade, and it was my first camp ever, and the first day -- I think it was four days, three hours a day. And the first day I won the Hawkeye Hustler, which is like the coolest award. It was a little medal, and I still have it to this day, I'm sure. And I got through the camp and I got done, and on the Thursday we ended up getting the awards, and I remember I got the MVP of the camp, and the coach went up to my mom and said, man, he reminds me a lot of myself, just from a competitive perspective. And the coach was Bruce Pearl. He was my coach for the camp.

And it was a cool story. I never knew it until later in life. It was like, yeah, Bruce Pearl was your coach in that.

Q. Coach, I know it's been probably a crazy two days, day, whatever it has. Could you kind of break down how it all played out, ever since Drake was eliminated and to the point where you're standing here in front of us? And, also, how long does a plane ride take from Waukee to Iowa City out of curiosity?

BEN McCOLLUM: It took longer to get to the airport. It was like 20 minutes. It was like you get up and then you get down. Took long enough for my son, Tate, to lean his chair back and relax. That's about it.

So the process went like this. So most years, and every year for the last nine, there's been these processes of schools reaching out, and generally they reach out to an agent and the agent handles a lot of the stuff, and then you go through it.



I've always been the type that really wants to focus on the team that I have, and so I try to set boundaries in regards to that. So I think the first contact might have been a Saturday before the NCAA Tournament. And I had no idea that that was going to happen. We had a conversation then, and then we had a conversation on Monday.

On Monday I told Beth, who was phenomenal through this process, and I said, hey, I really need to focus on my team. Like I can't be divided -- I can't be in decision-making mode while I'm coaching. I have to put as much energy as I can into that. And she respected that as much as any athletic director can respect that. Maybe a text of, hey, good game, good luck, that kind of thing. Simple stuff. But, no like, hey, are you going to do this; hey, do you want to do this; hey, you know, trying to negotiate all that stuff with me.

On that Sunday we got back, then it was on. And then, obviously, because Iowa is so patient, and I certainly appreciate every part of that. That's what pros do. And ended up making the trip to Iowa City Sunday, and then Monday morning at I think maybe 6:45 a.m., I signed the papers and committed. So that was it.

But, no, it was kind of a short process because of how long Beth allowed me to coach my team. And, again, I appreciate that about as much as anything, and it also says what kind of athletic director she is. She's trying to build something bigger than just a transactional conversation. So we're going to fight for her. We're going to fight for the University of Iowa because of a lot of that.

Q. I wanted to ask you about point guard play. It's been a hallmark of your teams. What do you look for in a point guard when you're recruiting them and how you develop them?

A. You gotta have an unselfish kid, I think first and foremost. And all my point guards have been very unselfish. They've always averaged more with me than they have in high school. And so I kind of force them to be great, essentially.

You have to trust your own eyes in regards to their talent, athleticism, et cetera. Most coaches will watch and they'll get a visual of what he's supposed to play like because of what he looks like, and they won't actually watch how good he is.

Like Bennett, for instance, he looks like he should be mowing your lawn. Right? Just a 6'4, sandy-haired. But he's long and he's athletic, and he's got a competitive fire as much as there is, and he actually has his own lawn mowing business, ironically.

And then my point guard before that, Trevor Hudgins; point guard before that, Justin Pitts to Shot Cooper, all of them had that level of humility on top of it. So they're able to be coached consistently, and they're able to understand that they're not that special unless they have people with them. So the people with them allow them to be great, and vice versa.

Bennett would prefer to score zero points and have everybody else score 20. That's his mentality. And that's never changed. And that's how all my point guards will operate.

Q. Coach, congratulations. I just wanted to ask you if there are any of your former players at Drake who if they opt to go into the portal who you're hoping will follow you here to Iowa other than Bennett?

BEN McCOLLUM: Yeah, if they go in the portal and they opt in, you know, you always look at everybody who's in the portal, to not be too specific or detailed because I'm not sure who's in and who's out. So I don't want to actively recruit somebody like that right now.

We'll look at anybody that goes in the portal, to be quite honest.

Q. Regarding going forward with a 2025 class, I know it can be a little bit difficult to bring a freshman into a situation like this, and I know you're looking in the portal and looking in possibly bringing guys who were on the roster last year. But I guess what's the plan to approach maybe bringing in somebody in the '25 class looking at who you had at Drake, maybe Iowa has a signee? I'm curious what your plan is there.

BEN McCOLLUM: Honestly, you probably take the best players. So if there's a 2025 that's available and is one of the best players, then we're going to sign him. I'm not afraid of that.

I think to be a great program here at Iowa, I think it lends itself to building a culture, and so I think retention is probably your most important thing. And I also think making sure that your 15th, 14th, 13th, even 12th guy are guys that are developing and continuing to grow and get better so that they can become your one, two, three, four, five guys.

Two of my point guards actually red-shirted. One is going to play in the highest level in Europe and actually signed a two-way initially, and then the one before that was Player of the Year in Division II, and he red-shirted as well.

I'm not sure we're going to red shirt a bunch of people, but I am saying you do need to have some good quality high school kids in the program. Specific to 2025, we're going to take the best players.

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