

University of Iowa Wrestling Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Clarissa Chun

Gary Barta

Barbara Burke

Men's Wrestling Press Conference



getting us to this point today.

We did have a tremendous pool of talented, qualified candidates. At every interaction, Clarissa just rose to the top. All the discussions that we had, she did a great job, she really set herself apart.

As Gary mentioned, her credentials obviously speak for themselves. Myself personally, I was impressed by her passion, her competitiveness, her desire to be an ambassador for the sport of women's wrestling.

We as a group are confident in her ability to assess talent, train young women and lead these women. She's demonstrated this at the highest level of the sport. She clearly knows what it takes to develop champions.

She's very humble, to the point that I had to joke with her and tell her to not downplay her accomplishments. She's done so much for this sport. She deserves a lot of credit for the growth of women's wrestling.

While today we are introducing Coach Chun as our first head coach, her actual physical date does not start until February 7th. She has some commitments she wanted to fulfill, and we want to be respectful of the others and individual work that she has. She wants to complete those duties.

Once she gets here in Iowa City in February, I'm confident she's going to hit the ground running. She'll be hiring staff, recruiting, planning, scheduling, all the things you would expect to happen as we start up a program.

We anticipate we'll have some young women that will want to join the program in fall of '22. We will work with coach and our compliance staff to make a path forward for those group of women. They will be able to train and potentially compete unattached. As we've mentioned before, the actual first season of competition under the Black and Gold, University of Iowa, will not begin until the fall of 2023.

With that, it gives me great pleasure to introduce not only the first head women's wrestling coach here at the University of Iowa, but also the first NCAA Power 5 head women's wrestling coaching in the country, Clarissa Chun.

CLARISSA CHUN: Thanks, Barbara, Gary.

GARY BARTA: Back in September I talked about it being an historic day because we announced we were adding women's wrestling. This is another historic day because we have found our coach. So excited to introduce Clarissa Chun as our first head coach of women's wrestling at Iowa.

Clarissa's credentials speak for themselves as a competitor, as a coach, but what really became apparent as we started to go through the interview process is her passion, her plan, her excitement to lead this program. Just everybody who was involved in the search, it was a consensus that she was the choice. So we're so pleased that she said yes.

What I'd like to do before Coach Chun speaks is have Barbara Burke, our deputy athletic director, who oversaw the search, went through the process, talk a little bit about that process, kind of our plans up until now and moving forward. She'll then turn it over to Coach Chun.

BARBARA BURKE: Thank you. I'll try not to repeat some of Gary's comments.

We're so excited to be here today. I want to start by thanking Gary for his leadership and support as we move towards adding women's wrestling and adding our first head coach.

I also want to thank Tom, Terry, Ryan and Bobby for their support and their partnership. This doesn't work without the collaboration and partnership of our men's wrestling program. That's critically important to us. They have been onboard and bought in since day one of the discussion of adding women's wrestling. Coach, thank you so much. You can have a chance to talk to coach a little bit later if you'd like.

Also a special thanks to the search committee, all the time, work, effort, energy they put into the search process,

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I'm at a loss for words honestly in the sense that since the announcement yesterday I've just been overwhelmed with positive support and love from the community, the wrestling community, and the community in Iowa. I can't express how much gratitude I have for everyone, everyone here today.

I know that this doesn't happen overnight. To start a women's wrestling program at a Power 5 institution is only the beginning of so many great things to come. I know that it took a lot of hard work and investment and commitment from everyone in the community in Iowa and at the University of Iowa administration. Thank you for everyone who has been a big part of making it happen.

I'm just going to say a lot of thank yous. There are a lot of people I need to thank because I wouldn't be sitting here but for that reason.

Gary, thank you so much for your sincere interest in me as a person before engaging me and my coaching style. I really appreciate that. The support that I have at University of Iowa, it goes beyond what I do but who I am.

Barbara, thank you so much for your endless support throughout this whole process and being available for any questions that I have or didn't have. You made sure that I was able to make the decisions that I needed to make based on all the information you can give me, so that way I can make the best choices for myself and for everyone involved. So thank you.

Josh Schamberger, who is not in here. He is a huge supporter and advocate for women's wrestling. I thank him for connecting me with the wonderful people in Iowa. It's going to go so far. I'm so excited for this opportunity.

Coach Tom Brands, Terry, everyone, all the wrestling staff, men's wrestling team, I feel the support so much from men's wrestling here. I know there is a lot of the behind-the-scenes work that made this happen. Thank you for plugging it in Gary's and Barbara's ear to be the first Power 5 institution to get women's wrestling. No better place than here to get it going.

I got to meet with Cathy Zaharis, she's awesome and I know she'll be one of the biggest fans of women's wrestling.

Anyone who is interested in learning how to wrestle, females, come see me (laughter).

To the hiring committee, thank you so much for all your time and your diligence throughout the process, your

patience. I appreciate you helping me go through this and being patient with me through the process.

I'm forever grateful for Coach Terry Steiner. He's a great leader and mentor to me as I was an athlete and as an assistant coach next to him at USA Wrestling. He's helped me grow so much as a coach and as a person.

I look forward to continuing my partnership with him in ways that I still want to develop national, world and Olympic champions, but instead here at the University of Iowa. I'm excited for that opportunity to bring them all in here on this campus.

Thank you to USA Wrestling for helping me develop as well, giving me the opportunities to develop as a coach.

Obviously my family, my partner Waylon, who has been my rock throughout this process.

This is an historic moment for young girls, young women across the country. This is an amazing opportunity for everyone that wants to come and compete at University of Iowa. This was a dream of mine when I was in high school, but that wasn't a possibility. Wrestling back then, we were making T-shirts that said, "girls play volleyball, boys play basketball, and men wrestle."

How many of you guys heard it? I'm sure a lot of the wrestlers have seen those t-shirts running around. You know what? Now women wrestle too. They have the opportunity to come to the University of Iowa, the crown jewel of wrestling is right here, I'm just so excited to get it going.

With that I know it's going to come with high expectations. Just because they're here on campus, they become a Hawkeye, doesn't mean they're going to be winning national titles. They have to work for it, earn it, make it happen.

I think with the energy from the community, that will help lift them up to get after that. So I'm so excited to meet the challenges ahead, bring a winning program here with women's wrestling at Iowa. Go Hawkeyes.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the table.

Q. Clarissa, what made this an attractive position for you to move on in your career? What made this seem like the right move for you?

CLARISSA CHUN: The opportunity to grow as a person and as a coach. I told Barbara in the past, I could continue working alongside Coach Terry Steiner, amazing, love

working with him, and the women on the national team. Love working with them as well. No better place than to try to take a leap and challenge myself, breaking out, trying to fill that head coach role, than here in Iowa. No better place.

When I thought about, Can I do this? Is Iowa the place? It's absolutely the place. It is deeply rooted, wrestling is deeply rooted in the state of Iowa. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but the University of Iowa to get it going.

I had instant support from day one. I know maybe other institutions may feel the same way, but I can feel it. Every time I come to Iowa City, Coralville area, it's there, whether anyone has wrestled or not. I feel the deep support within the community for wrestling, so I'm excited.

Q. Clarissa, you made the Olympic team in this building in 2012. The arena was sold out. What experience did that leave you with?

CLARISSA CHUN: That's exactly what I think about, the energy of Carver-Hawkeye. After winning that, as an athlete I try to tune that out, I wasn't the type of person that waved around and looked up in the crowds or anything.

The next day after winning Olympic trials in 2012, I had breakfast. I couldn't even tell you the name of the breakfast joint. Some nice young guy came up and congratulated me, didn't even say, but he ended up buying breakfast for me because he was really excited that I made the team. Very knowledgeable about wrestling. He came up and talked to me about my match, whatnot. It was really exciting.

That doesn't happen anywhere that I've been, so...

Q. If you had to describe your coaching philosophy and what you are bringing to Iowa City how would you describe that?

CLARISSA CHUN: I'm an athlete-centered kind of coach, meaning that I care about the athletes very much. I know that every athlete is going to be different, how they are motivated, how they operate, whatnot.

What I do know as far as drawing on my own experiences, I know consistency is key to everything in life, as far as if you want to move forward and be successful, right? It's not what you put into on the mat but also what you're doing off the mat.

Then being competitive. Competitive, whether it's being your best self for that day, whatever you can pull. You can have a hard day, but bring your best self to that day. Be

competitive, be consistent. For me it's about caring for one another.

Q. As you move to the next phase in your career, what do you see as the biggest challenge?

CLARISSA CHUN: I think I'm going to learn a lot through this process of coaching at this level. I'm sure I'll come across a lot of challenges. I know sometimes I tend to want to take a lot on my plate, make sure everything is good. I'm excited for the opportunity to hire a staff that will help me move the team forward to represent Iowa Hawkeyes.

Q. You've experienced a lot of different firsts throughout your wrestling career, high school, Missouri Valley, when women's wrestling was out of the Olympics. How can those experiences help you?

CLARISSA CHUN: Oh, man, it's always great to be first, right, whether it's on top of the podium or not.

Honestly, I like building relationships. I did call up my coach back at Missouri Valley, Coach Machholz, because he's the one that got women's wrestling, first collegiate program, to offer women's wrestling scholarships. I picked his brain on pitfalls I could come across being the first. I might get a ton of people want to explode through this door, "Hey, take us." Just being able to manage, how to manage.

I'm excited to be the first, though, and get it going.

Q. Gary or Barbara, you said Clarissa stood out in the interviewing and hiring process. What specifically? Can you tell a story to describe how she stood out in your eyes?

BARBARA BURKE: For me it really is the passion that she has for the sport. I think that's really important, number one. Clearly she knows wrestling. That was never an issue from the get-go. It was about the fit for Iowa. She loves the Iowa brand. She's been around Iowa City and Coralville. She understands the importance of wrestling in this community.

The big picture. She gets the big picture.

The other piece of it is being an ambassador for the sport. We do want to continue to help support girls and women's wrestling. What a great ambassador that we can have for our program and for women's wrestling across the country. That was a little bit of it for me.

I never worried about her ability to coach. She's been

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coaching at the highest level, right? She's developed Olympic champions. If she can do that there, I'm confident in her ability to do that here.

Q. What do you want the bedrocks of the program to be, what do you want the program to be about?

CLARISSA CHUN: I want a team unity, a collaboration, a competitive collaboration. I think when the team can work together and be competitive, I think great things can happen.

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