

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship Final Four: Iowa vs South Carolina

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American Airlines Center

Iowa Hawkeyes

Lisa Bluder

Semi-Finals Pregame Media Conference



Honestly, I don't remember a whole lot about that team, other than Coach Stringer.

Q. My question is, based off of a recent article posted about you and your impact on Iowa women's basketball past the court, one of your players, Kate Martin, described you as someone who was always looking to instill positivity and resilience into your players. If you could tell me how you maintain that competitive championship-caliber level of basketball while also impacting and raising up a group of women leaders?

LISA BLUDER: I really think they go hand-in-hand. I don't think you can get to this level without being positive, without being resilient because you face so many bumps in the road.

We had some bumps in the road early in the season. If you're not resilient, you cannot handle those. I think your positivity gets you through those tough times.

I'm looking at you're coached by Randi Henderson, one of my former players. Randi is the epitome of that to me, in her battles she's fighting with cancer. She was a great player, just so you know. All Big Ten player. Really truly one of the all time Iowa greats. I'm just so proud of her and her fight and what she's done.

I hope you enjoy your experience playing for her 'cause she's a marvelous, marvelous woman and unbelievable role model.

I believe those things just go hand-in-hand. You have to have them both or you're not going to survive.

Q. She very much instills that in us. I'm sure she thanks you for that, and I thank you for that.

LISA BLUDER: Some small part, I hope so.

Q. Coach, what are some of the pros and cons that you experienced with this new regional setup? Would you advocate for the NCAA to continue it in the future?

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate everybody for being on us. We have the opportunity to visit with the head coach of the Iowa Hawkeyes, Lisa Bluder. Iowa is participating in its second Women's Final Four here in 2023.

Coach Bluder, I'll turn it over to you for a quick opening statement.

LISA BLUDER: Thanks, Rick.

It's great to be here in Dallas this morning. To be here other than being a spectator, for sure.

Our team is really obviously thrilled. I thought we played really well against Louisville. I think we're playing very good basketball right now. But we have to be playing great basketball facing this storied program in South Carolina. We know what the challenge is, undefeated, ranked No. 1, their unbelievable talent.

We're going to try to enjoy the week and give it the best opportunity we can to come out victorious.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coach, you coached against the Iowa 1993 Final Four team. What do you remember about that team?

LISA BLUDER: Oh, you are testing my memory when I haven't had much sleep (laughter).

I honestly don't remember a whole lot. I've heard from Coach Stringer. He called me immediately after we beat Louisville. In fact, she was my first voice message I got that night.

I know Coach Stringer is behind us. I haven't been able to get back to her yet, but I will soon.



LISA BLUDER: I thought it worked out really well. There really weren't many cons at all. The pros, let me start there. I think the pros were that we were in a city that really embraces women's basketball in Seattle. I thought the attendance was great. The city was wonderful. They did a great job of hosting. The arena was beautiful.

I thought all that was really, really good.

It was a big enough city that you didn't really even notice there were, like, eight teams there, you know? So I thought it was great for the fans.

The only con, and this is such a small one, we really had to find two places to practice because you only got one hour to practice. I really need like an hour and a half, that's what I needed to get ready for those games. That's a small little logistical thing. Honestly, it was great.

I think the format was good. We would of course love to see one in the Midwest because I know we would have had 10,000 Iowa Hawkeye fans there, although it felt like we had 10,000 anyway.

We'd love to have that so our fans could be getting there a little bit easier.

Q. What have the last two days been like? What have you guys been able to do, just kind of crash or... You went right to Dallas, isn't that correct?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, we sat on a plane a long time yesterday. We had some travel issues a little bit. It's things that can't be helped.

I mean, the game got over. Honestly we all did crash at that point, that night. Yesterday was supposed to be a travel day. It kept getting delayed and delayed. We didn't get here till 10:30 last night I think. So we really haven't done a whole lot. We're having our first team meeting in a little bit here.

Q. How are you going to deal with South Carolina's size and their offensive rebounding? What are you going to have to do to combat that?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I think they had 25 offensive rebounds yesterday against Maryland. 25 or 26. I mean, they're an amazing offensive rebounding team. Somebody kind of just described it to me as you're going to a bar fight when you try to go rebound against them, they're just so good. They're so tall, like you say. Especially with Cardoso coming off the bench at 6'7".

How do we deal with their height? We can't really handle it one on one, in my opinion. We have to have help from other people and do our best that we can to get a body on them, just be able to get over-the-back calls if we can get some. I know they don't come very often against them. I mean, it's the only thing you can do, right? Box out and hope for the best on that. Try to hit more threes than they can hit twos.

Q. I'm sure you've heard from a million people the last 48 hours, from all different eras of your coaching career. I'm wondering if that's kind of further putting into perspective how meaningful this accomplishment is? I'm sure you've heard from people from early 2000s, mid 2000s, all that. How has this accomplishment kind of in that perspective united everybody that's been through this program?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, it's not even just this program. I have players from St. Ambrose that are driving here to Dallas. When we were in Seattle, I had a former Drake player there. I had former Iowa players, too. Becky Gallery was there.

What makes it more special I think is the people that I'm hearing from that I didn't even coach that were Iowa Hawkeyes, that Vivian coached. They're saying how much they're behind us. To me that is almost the most rewarding because coming into this program, Angie Lee was there for five years between Coach Stringer and I, but I always wanted to establish that relationship between me and Coach Stringer's players. We're all Hawkeyes. We've been able to do that somewhat. It just seems like it's growing and growing. I know a lot of that is because Coach Stringer is so positive about our program, and that we have a relationship.

Yeah, when I hear from those people, that's really special. But certainly former players, yeah. That's the best.

There's a whole former group, former Hawks getting together, at Coach Henderson's house. I know that.

Q. What will be your practice availability in terms of just sort of kind of getting the kids back on the court and doing things they're used to doing?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, we're going to practice today. This afternoon at 2:00, we have our first practice. We'll have a scout meeting 1:00 before that. Then actually tomorrow we're so busy we're not going to practice. We're going to have more film meetings, which actually this time of year it can be really beneficial. Save the legs.

I'm not going to really be able to teach 'em, like Greg was



asking about boxing out, I'm not going to be able to teach them to box out at this point. You either got it or you don't, right? It's really getting some shots up, getting more familiar with South Carolina. I think that's the hardest thing this time of year is just getting familiar with programs you don't see all the time.

In the Big Ten you see people over and over again. You know 'em from year to year. When you get into the NCAA Tournament, you're playing teams you've never really played before. That's just getting familiar with their style and their personnel. So we can do a lot of that on film.

Q. Just talk about the matchup between Aliyah Boston and Caitlin Clark, what do each of those great players bring to the table?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I mean, America gets to see two fabulous, spectacular basketball players in the same 40 minutes. It doesn't get a lot better than that.

Aliyah Boston, I got to spend a little bit of time with her last year when we were doing the Player of the Year circuit with Caitlin and with Aliyah. Great young lady. Unbelievable player obviously. But obviously they play totally different games. They're totally different positions.

Caitlin is a guard, Aliyah that power forward/center type of player. It's almost like comparing apples to oranges. You really can't do that with these two players. They both bring a completely different skill set and they're both excellent at what they do.

Again, America gets to see two great players within one contest. That's amazing.

Q. Having three teams in the Final Four that haven't been there in the last decade, this year we've seen a lot of upsets. We've seen this parity that we've always talked about coming to fruition. What is it about this season that's allows for a different field in the Final Four and for all these upsets we've seen in the earlier rounds?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I mean, obviously the parity is just increasing every year. Our game is improving every year. Kids are coming out of high school ready to play at this level immediately.

Also I think the transfer portal has made a big difference, not for us particularly, but for a lot of people. I think it's made people change the complexion of their team right away. You have a need, you don't have to wait a couple years to recruit to that need, you can go right away into the portal and get somebody that's experienced and somebody

that's proven.

So I think the portal has changed that quite a bit.

Q. Over the last 36 hours, was there a point where it really set in that, Wow, I'm really going to the Final Four?

LISA BLUDER: You know, I don't know if it still has. Although I did walk to the arena today and kind of looked around the outside of the arena this morning. It's a beautiful arena. This is a great city to host.

I think when we walked back to the hotel and saw it all Hawked up with the Tigerhawk, it was pretty cool. It's kind of finally setting in.

When we were bringing our kids when they were little to the conventions all the time, how we'd go to the conventions and see all the other uniforms there. We said, Well, wow, we got to take the kids to the convention this year.

Well, we've done it before. Yeah, but not with Iowa stuff there.

It will be pretty cool.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Bluder, thanks for being with us. We do appreciate it. We look forward to seeing you over at the American Airlines Center here.

LISA BLUDER: My pleasure, Rick. Thank you.

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