

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 2 Semifinal - Colorado vs Iowa

Friday, March 29, 2024

Albany, New York, USA

Times Union Center

**Iowa Hawkeyes**

**Coach Lisa Bluder**

**Caitlin Clark**

**Gabbie Marshall**

**Kate Martin**

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference



**compression brace on, stretching? Could she play tomorrow?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, she's doubtful for tomorrow. Molly is doubtful for tomorrow.

**Q. How is she doing? How close is she, I guess?**

LISA BLUDER: I don't know, I really thought she'd be back by now. I really did. I have no idea how long it's going to take for her to completely heal, but we're not going to put her out there when it's unsafe for her to be out there.

**Q. I was hoping you could take us back to Iowa inviting Lynette Woodard for a very special game for Caitlin, for the program, for women's basketball, and why you personally feel that that was something that was important to do?**

LISA BLUDER: I just don't want the history of our game to be forgotten, and Lynette is a huge part of the history of our game. She's the leading scorer, and I just wanted her to be there in the arena to show her the appreciation that we all have for her and what she laid the groundwork for what we're experiencing now.

That's why it was important for me to have her there.

All the great women that were a part of our game, there's been so many of them and we don't talk about them anymore, and I think that's really sad.

**Q. Just in terms of getting a rematch of sorts with this team, in what ways are you able to use that to your advantage as you've kind of game planned for them? Obviously you're a little different, they're a little different, but what similarities have you been able to utilize as you head into this one?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, we had the whole team watch the film from last year, so they kind of have it in their mind, in addition to film from this year.

Neither team has changed. I know they're a little bit different, but neither team has changed a lot with their style

**Q. I wanted to ask about a couple of things that Colorado could present as challenges tomorrow. First their rebounding with Vonleh and Quay Miller in the middle and their three-point shooting last year; adding Maddie Nolan into the mix, that changes things a little bit. Curious to hear about their rebounding and three-point shooting?**

LISA BLUDER: I think you just said it all. We have to box out better than we did last year. We gave up 22 O-boards against them last year. Just crazy numbers.

Obviously they have two very good three-point shooters right now. Adding Maddie Nolan does pose a problem just because now they have two excellent three-point shooters on the perimeter and a great inside game.

**Q. You've given Caitlin so much room to be open and public with the media and making her the face of Iowa basketball. What is it about her or your relationship with her that has allowed you to do that for her?**

LISA BLUDER: I'd say it's trust. I completely trust her maturity. She is extremely mature, has handled every situation that's been thrown at her, and she's had a lot of different situations thrown at her. She's handled them all beautifully.

I think both of those things, trust and maturity, that she can handle it.

**Q. What's the latest with Molly Davis with the**



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of play.

They only lost one starter, we lost two starters, and I think they replaced theirs with Maddie Nolan, like I said, a really good player. This is a very experienced group. You're looking at three grad students and a senior in the starting lineup. Both teams are pretty experienced.

I'm sure they're looking forward to this rematch from last year.

**Q. You talked about the distractions, different things Caitlin has handled. There was an announcement of Ice Cube offering \$5 million for her playing in the Big 3. I just wondered if you all even talked about that. Obviously you're focused on the game, but things like that that come up, is it even something that people tease her about or how do you handle that when it's happening and while you guys are playing?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I'm not sure how her teammates are. We haven't even talked about it to be quite honest. It doesn't have anything to do with us right now. Let's not even talk about it.

She did tell me about the invitation that she was getting for USA Basketball, but she hopes that she's not there. We all hope she's not there next weekend. But she was invited, and she shared that with me.

The other stuff, that's just -- it's crazy.

**Q. The fact that Colorado has the two big kids, Quay and Aaronette, how do they present different problems for you guys with just Hannah as the post?**

LISA BLUDER: Well, I mean, Quay is a power forward, and so she can play the post, but she's a power forward, and Kate has been doing a good job for us all year at the power forward position.

Yeah, we're a little bit smaller there, and Quay will come out and face up and shoot threes, as well. So she's just kind of a big power forward, and I think that we've -- I think that's okay for us.

**Q. Is there anything Caitlin can do now that would give you a wow moment, like, wow, I didn't know she could do that? And if not, what's the last one you had that you remember of a wow moment from her?**

LISA BLUDER: That's a good question. I mean, I don't know if she could give us any more wow moments. She's given us so many over the last four years. Whether it's shooting incredible shots, passing the ball like no other.

I'm not sure she could do anything yet that we haven't seen.

My last oh, wow moment, man, there's been a lot, but Michigan State at home was a pretty big oh, wow moment for me when she hit that three at the buzzer again this year.

But certainly she's just a special player, and I'm really thankful -- here we are four years into it, and it went like the blink of an eye.

**Q. On Caitlin again, much has been made about her competitiveness. Is there any one story that you have that really kind of epitomizes how competitive she is and maybe how you've had to rein that in or temper that a little bit?**

LISA BLUDER: Man. I mean, I've had to call technicals on her in practice. I mean, she gets -- like you see her in games and the emotion she plays with in games, the passion, the highs, the lows -- she's the same way in practice when we go against our practice guys, when we have officials in, and the officials that we're bringing in sometimes don't want to call technicals on us, so I'll just do it from the bench because I do feel like we have to try to help her maintain her composure at times.

If they're not going to do it, then I will.

**Q. Regarding last game, you got no three-pointers from anyone outside Caitlin, from any of the supporting cast. How do you reignite Gabbie, Kate, all them from deep? What's the key?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, to me, this is going to sound so simplistic, but honestly, it's so much just confidence, and it's just getting in the gym and seeing that ball splash through the net and feeling good about it and envisioning yourself being successful.

But at this point in the season, they know they're good shooters. I don't have to remind them too much, but I will, because again, I just think it's such a huge, huge part of it is the confidence building.

**Q. You guys have played a little faster each of the four years of Caitlin's career. Obviously the game against West Virginia was your slowest paced of the season. Wondering how important pace is going to be in this game, and what are things you can do, have the team do early on to kind of set the pace?**

LISA BLUDER: You know, I think both teams like to play quicker than what West Virginia did, so I think it'll be a little

bit more up and down game. But West Virginia really tried to slow it down, and they did a nice job with it. They did a really good job with it. Again, their defense was very good.

I think not having to get the ball to Caitlin sounds like a funny thing to speed the game up, but might be an opportunity for us, to not get her the ball right off the bat, get her into a shooting position instead of a ball handling position where they want to pick her up.

**Q. You mentioned confidence. How important is that with Hannah? You mentioned the other night about wanting her to be more aggressive. How have you seen that or tried to get her to develop that this season, and how important has Caitlin been with her in terms of that?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I think your peers are so much more important than your coaches in building confidence. That's what great leaders do. Great leaders are able to bring up everybody around them, and that's what Caitlin has done with Hannah.

It's kind of like you tell -- if you're a parent and you tell your kid to do something, and they're like, uh-uh, and the neighbor tells them, oh, wow, it's a revelation. Same thing now. Coaches can say something, but if the players say it, it means so much more.

So, yes, we're going to continue to try to build her confidence because I just don't think she's tapped her potential, even come close to it. I think she's a marvelous athlete and somebody that just needs to be told how good she is.

I think there's a lot of women that are like that, unfortunately, that lose their confidence quickly, and people have tried to suppress them, keep them down, instead of building them up and letting them shine their light. She needs to shine her light because we're at our best then.

**Q. You talk about Caitlin and everybody knows what she can do on the floor and off the floor. Has she had a bigger impact on her teammates with her basketball knowledge and the things that she can do on the floor, or is it the things that the rest of us don't see?**

LISA BLUDER: I'd say it's the things the rest of you don't see. Honestly, she is the one that's cracking the jokes, she's the one that keeps the locker room happy, fun.

Kate Martin does a lot of that, too, don't get me wrong. But again, like you said, everybody can see the basketball ability, but you guys don't get to see -- she's a great

student, too.

What she's doing for like the Food Bank in Iowa City, what she's doing with her foundation, how she's improving our community with that, you guys don't get to see all of those things, but then you also don't get to see the goofy Caitlin that we get to see and that we love.

**Q. Logistically I'd like to get your opinion on the super regionals, eight teams, four locker rooms, hotels all over the place. Did you like it the way it was before or do you like it now? Did they make any changes from last year that you think have improved things? What is your opinion?**

LISA BLUDER: Well, we haven't maybe been here long enough to see if there's been any improvements or not. Truly Seattle was great for us. We were in a great hotel. Seattle was good.

Albany, obviously the hotels aren't as plentiful and maybe as nice, and obviously we're talking about every time we're on extreme coasts. We play some pretty good basketball in the Midwest, too, and we'd love to have the opportunity to showcase women's basketball at its finest in the Midwest, as well.

I'm not sure that I love the two extremes that we're seeing because I think it's a disadvantage to us. You've got UCLA and Colorado flying halfway across the country. Can't there be something in the middle that helps a little bit? I don't know. I would think so.

I think women's basketball has grown so quickly, we haven't been able to keep up with it. It has, it's exploded, and we do these bids so far out that I don't think people knew what to expect three or four years ago when they bid on these sites. They didn't know what to expect.

**Q. Caitlin, when you're playing in a new venue like this, like Albany for the first time, what does it mean to you to play in front of people who have never seen you play in person, including young girls?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, that's something we were talking about. We love playing in front of our home crowd, and it's been really special all year long to play in front of 15,000 people every single game.

But when you get to go on the road, it kind of takes you back to see how many Iowa fans there are across the country, and that's kind of been the biggest thing for us all year. No matter where we've been able to go, whether it was on the East Coast, whether it was Nebraska, anywhere, we had great crowds.

And I think we're going to see the same thing here this weekend, so I think it's just special. It's not anything you ever take for granted, and it definitely helps. It adds a little motivation, adds a little boost, and they rally around you whether you're on offense or defense. It's super special.

**Q. Caitlin, can you talk about the growth of women's basketball from when you were a freshman and playing in front of cardboard cutouts to now? And Gabbie and Kate, I'm guessing you've seen her in commercials. What's the opinion when you've seen her on a State Farm or Gatorade or any other commercial?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, it's been cool to see the evolution of crowds since my first year here. Obviously playing in Carver in front of just cardboard cutouts and our family, and then going down to the bubble and really playing in front of no one.

I think there was limited fans when we got to the Sweet 16 and played inside of the Alamodome. And then the next two years got crazier and crazier, and obviously this year has really taken off and it's really hard to get a ticket to one of our games.

I don't think it's ever something you take for granted. I hope it's going to keep growing across the board, especially when I'm done playing here in college. You're not just seeing it with Iowa, you're seeing it all across the country. It's hard to get in the doors to women's basketball games, and that's exactly how it should be.

That's how it should have been for a really long time. The game is great. There's so many stars in our game. There's a lot of young talent. People playing the game the right way. I think that's what attracts people to come and watch. They play with passion, and they play with emotion, they're fiery, they can score the basketball, they play good defense, and games are close.

The parity is getting better and better in women's basketball, and people love that.

GABBIE MARSHALL: I like seeing her in the commercials. I like when she has her makeup all done and her hair all done. Sometimes it plays like 10 times in a row when you're watching a game, but I like seeing her.

KATE MARTIN: Me and Caitlin are roommates and we were sitting in the hotel last night and the State Farm ad pops up and we just look at each other and started laughing.

I just think it's really cool. I don't know, it just brings more awareness to women's basketball and it brings more awareness to not only her, but our entire team and Iowa, so I think it's awesome.

**Q. Regardless of reaching your goals this year, you're going to be in a position where you're dwindling to the last few games. I'm wondering how each of you take a moment, if you do take a moment, to kind of take it all in prior to each of these?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I would say for myself, like the moment that I take everything in is like I just take a deep breath before the National Anthem and kind of soak in the environment and the crowd, and then you get competitive for 40 minutes and enjoy that, and then when I walk off the court I try to take as much time as possible to sign as many autographs or whatever and kind of soak in the environment and enjoy that, because you don't really know how many games you have left at this point.

We just had a practice, we play tomorrow, and that's really all you're guaranteed. You're trying to go out there and win and fight for another day, and I think for all three of us like we don't want this to end. We love coming to practice. We love playing games with each other. You want to soak it in and keep extending it out.

GABBIE MARSHALL: Yeah, just to piggyback on that, you obviously want to play as long as you can, but I'll look at them sometimes and just be like, wow, this is almost over.

But think about all the memories that we've made together on and off the court. I think that's the most important thing. That's what we'll remember forever, is just the people that we've been around, the coaches, the other players, and just what we've been able to do together.

KATE MARTIN: Yeah, I just want to echo what they've said, but also I think that's what makes March Madness so fun, is when you have seniors that feel like they have nothing to lose. That's when you see buzzer beaters and game winners and things like that and that's why it's so fun.

And we obviously have five seniors on our team, so we want to extend our time as long as possible because we do have a lot of fun playing and we love each other. Really I take my moments to soak it all in right before tip. I kind of look around to see how many people are there and just like, wow, I can't believe I'm in this position, and I feel extremely grateful.

**Q. Caitlin, we were able to go to a local practice with an AAU team, middle school aged girls here in Albany, and almost all of them were wearing Iowa 22 Caitlin**

**Clark shirts or jerseys. What does that mean to you to be able to provide a role model for especially young girls to be able to identify with across the country?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think that's the best part about what I get to do. I grew up having those role models and aspiring to be where I am today. It's super special to see your impact not only in the state of Iowa but across the country.

And I think that's been the biggest thing for us this year is it hasn't only been in Iowa. Obviously Iowa has supported us through and through, but no matter where we go there's so many people supporting us and wanting us to succeed.

To be able to have that impact on the next generation is really special, and you just hope to dream and aspire to be like you one day and chase after all their dreams.

**Q. Your coach was just in here talking about how competitive Caitlin is at practice and sometimes she has to issue her technical fouls. Can you give examples of that competitiveness --**

CAITLIN CLARK: That hasn't happened in a while.

**Q. She also mentioned how loose Caitlin is in the locker room and how playful she is, too.**

GABBIE MARSHALL: Yeah, I think it's good that she has that balance. Obviously when she steps on the court she's going to show the passion and just the fiery attitude that she has just because she loves the game so much. She wants to win. She hates losing.

So that's where that comes into play.

The technicals and just -- I don't know, our managers are our refs at practice, so that can kind of get out of hand sometimes --

CAITLIN CLARK: They're horrible at reffing.

GABBIE MARSHALL: She's so goofy and fun and loving in the locker room and just off the court. I think it's good that she has that balance.

KATE MARTIN: Yeah, I agree with everything Gabbie said. I can understand her frustration because our managers are not good refs at all.

But yeah, it's fun. And Coach Bluder, I think it's just a good coaching tactic. Like she would do that to me. I've gotten a technical, as well, so she's not alone.

But it just puts us in check and she's just holding us accountable, because you can't do that in games and you will get a technical and put your team in a bad position.

But it's fun whenever we can all go into the locker room if you get into like a competitive little tiff or whatever, and then in the locker room you're just fun and loving right away again.

So we can have that balance and know that we love each other at the end of the day. It doesn't really matter what happens out on the court.

**Q. Lisa was talking about confidence, and she mentioned the other night about Hannah needing to be more aggressive, and you've talked a couple of times this season about how special she's going to be, how good of a player she can be. How important is that for you to say those things and for you to have those conversations with her in order to build up her confidence and be the player that you know she can be?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think that's the biggest thing with Hannah, is just going up to her and giving her those words of affirmation and telling her how much we believe in her. Whether it's me, whether it's them two, whether it's her other post players that she works with every single day, I think that's the biggest thing for all of them is just knowing that their point guard believes in them and knows that they can rise to the occasion.

We've all Hannah can do. She put up 47 points. She can absolutely dominate. In my opinion she runs the floor better than anybody in the country.

But I think that is the biggest thing, is like saying that right to her face and she knows how much I believe in her and how much the rest of the team believes in her, because when she's playing her best basketball it adds a whole 'nother dimension to our team.

But yeah, I think that's been the thing for us all year, is just continue to build her up, continue to build our posts up, because they kind of had to play behind the shadow of Monika but they aren't Monika. They can do a lot of things that Monika couldn't, and they don't need to be Monika.

That's not what we've needed all year, and they've done a really tremendous job of rising to the occasion. I think Hannah specifically has done just that and improved her game in so many areas.

**Q. Caitlin, I know your focus is on this, but there's been some off-court things with the Ice Cube offer with**

**the Big 3, and then with the invitation -- which I know you probably hope that invitation doesn't happen because you want to be with your team in Cleveland -- but I wondered just your thoughts on those things that are happening a little bit off court. I know like I said your focus is on this, but there's been a lot of chatter about those things.**

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, to be honest, I found about the Big 3 thing at the exact time you all did, and my main focus is just on playing basketball. I think that's the biggest thing.

Like you said, USA Basketball is my -- that's your dream. You always want to grow up and be on the Olympic team, but lucky for me, I have the opportunity of possibly not doing that because I want to be at the Final Four playing basketball with my team.

But if not, that's where I'll be. People that are on that roster are people that I idolize and have idolized growing up. Just to be extended a camp invite is something you have to be proud of and celebrate and enjoy.

But more than anything, my focus is on winning these two games, and that's exactly how it should be. I honestly don't talk about those things with really anybody. I have other people that deal with it, and they haven't said a word to me about it.

My main focus is on this team and helping us find a way to beat Colorado and hopefully win another one after that.

**Q. Caitlin, none of us here can imagine what you're going through and just the fanfare of all of this. There has to be some downsides to that, as well. I think of the interaction that everybody saw with you and your dad last week. That would have never happened if it wasn't you. What are some of the downsides? What's the toughest part of this for you?**

CAITLIN CLARK: Well, I think the first thing is I was never talking to my dad. I don't know why people thought that. My dad is my biggest supporter. He's literal by best friend and he was my first-ever basketball coach and somebody that has always been there.

People probably think my dad is super competitive because I am, but he's never been that way. He's like a chill, constant person in my life that I can always rely on.

I think it's kind of been the same story for me over the course of the two years. It's like I know people are always watching. I know eyeballs are always on me. That is kind of what happens when you are in the spotlight.

And it's anything you shy away from. I'm competitive. I'm fiery. That's how it is. And I think that's what has brought me a lot of success.

I think at the same time it's being able to channel that and use it in the best way, and yeah, I mean, my dad is literally one of my biggest supporters, and he honestly hasn't missed one single college basketball game of mine, and for that I'm forever thankful.

Yeah, I think our team has always talked about it. There's always people watching. There's always young girls with eyeballs on you, so you always want to always be on your best behavior, but also play with that competitive fire and passion that you always had that has brought our team so much success, and I think that's exactly what we do.

**Q. Gabbie, my question is Caitlin along with JuJu and Dyaisha are players that have brought us back to women's basketball history. How have the performances from this season in particular changed your knowledge of and your perspective of women's basketball, and then for Caitlin, being one of those players, how has the interactions with some of those legends of the game impacted or maybe given you a thought of how you would like to approach the next person to reach a record?**

GABBIE MARSHALL: Yeah, I think there's so much talent in women's basketball right now, and what they've been able to do on the court day in and day out, it's attracting more people to come want to watch, fill the stands. We saw that at Carver.

She's doing that on a daily basis, which is crazy to think about because you don't see that all the time. But like she said, there's so much young talent, as well, and I think it's just growing and growing.

Who wouldn't want to watch? It's so much fun. We play with so much joy. We're starting to see more passion from women. It's just going to continue to grow, and there's going to be more people, more eyes on us, and more people who want to fill the stands and come see us play.

CAITLIN CLARK: I think for myself it's been really cool, I think specifically Lynette Woodard was able to come to our Senior Night and be in Carver-Hawkeye Arena. Somebody that maybe wasn't always given all her flowers, but was really like a pioneer in our game and did so much for our game.

To be able to share that with her was really special. And as I've been able to break whatever record it is, it's been cool to have people that I've idolized and who I've aspired

to be in my life reach out and congratulate me.

Like you said, I hope I get to do that for the next person. Somebody is going to come along and break my records, and that's exactly how it should be. That's kind of the point of a record. Other people chase them down and break them.

And also, our game is evolving so much and there's so much talent, there's so much parity. That's why people want to watch. That's why people want to tune in.

I think I'm just forever grateful, and the next person that comes along to break mine, I'll be right there supporting them, and hopefully I can see it in person.

**Q. Caitlin, as the face of women's college basketball, I was wondering who else in women's college basketball would you pay to go see play, and is there a player or two flying under the radar that you think should get more flowers currently playing?**

CAITLIN CLARK: There would be so many I would pay to go see. I would say JuJu right now probably. That is who pay and go see. But also Hannah Hidalgo at Notre Dame. I think she's been tremendous. I think Hannah has kind of flown under the radar a little bit.

There's so many good players. Madison Booker. There's just so much young talent, and I think that's the coolest part of the game is where the game is going, how much young talent there is, but also they can't be one-and-dones. They get to stay and play this game for four years.

How exciting is that for women's basketball fans, to know our game is in really great hands and the talent level across the board for maybe even teams that maybe haven't consistently been in the Final Four. The parity is amazing, and I think that's what's going to help viewership numbers grow, too.

I love women's basketball. I'll pay any price to get in the door and watch talent across the board. That's what makes the game so fun, and that's what people do for our team. I would totally repay the favor.

**Q. First off, this is a time you year you want to be playing your best. What do you take from the last three games which have all been a little bit of a struggle, and also how this tournament run and the season as a whole has been different versus the past couple years?**

KATE MARTIN: Yeah, I mean, we're excited for our future. We look back at our previous games in the previous year

just to learn for what's to come.

But West Virginia posed its own problems in its own way, but they're a really good defensive team, and I think the pressure and what they did to us is definitely going to help us in the future.

Colorado is a really good team, and they've got a really good inside presence while they've got shooters surrounding No. 21 down there.

We're just really excited for what's to come. The season has been really cool with all the spotlight and everything. I think it's just you have to be in this position to grow the game, and with all the attention Caitlin gets, it shines a light on all of us. Like I said earlier, shines a light on every single one of them and Iowa as a program.

While it's been a little different with cameras literally everywhere all the time, it's also really cool at the same time. We've been enjoying it, and as the season is dwindling down, we're just trying to enjoy all these last moments together and have a lot of fun playing basketball together.

GABBIE MARSHALL: Yeah, I would say, too, this year compared to other years, we've had more people pack opposing arenas, as well. So the attention that she's bringing in and the attention that we get in opposing arenas is amazing.

We're seeing Hawk fans no matter where we go. We could go across the country. We saw Hawk fans at Rutgers, which is not an easy flight.

I think that's kind of where it's gone this year for us when we've been playing not only at home but in away arenas, as well. And like Kate said, we're just trying to play as long as we can and just enjoy every moment that we have with each other on and off the court.

CAITLIN CLARK: I would say the course -- you mentioned the last three games. I think the biggest thing for us is I don't feel like any of those three were complete games, but I feel like that also is -- to me that's a positive. We found ways to win all three of those.

To me Nebraska was playing the best basketball in the Big Ten Tournament. They were playing great basketball. Jaz Shelley was playing tremendous. Markowski was playing great. Potts was playing great. They really gave us everything we could handle, and we weathered the storm and we still found a way to win.

The same with West Virginia. Really our offense wasn't



clicking in the way that it should, and we still found ways to win and we played great defense.

To me, I don't see that as a negative. I see that as a positive. I see that as Iowa doesn't have to rely on scoring 90 points a game to win every single game. We can find other ways to win.

It's okay if we have a bad half. Not everything is going to be perfect. It's going to be okay if we have a bad quarter. So I think it's just looking at everything in a positive light.

Yeah, there was a million ways we could have got better from those three games, but at the same time, to me, that just shows the growth of our team and the growth of our program over the course of the last years. Be gritty, be resilient and find ways to win, and that's all that really matters when you're playing an NCAA Tournament.

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