

Lisa Bluder News Conference Transcript

Dec. 3, 2013

Opening Statement:

This is an important week for us. We're excited and off to a good start being 8-1, but we know a great opponent lies in front of us in Syracuse. They're ranked No. 22 in the country, but they could be much higher.

This is a team that was in the NCAA Tournament last year, they were young, their sophomores were All-Americans coming out of high school, and they're playing like it. They're shooting the 3-ball, force a lot of turnovers, and press the entire game. It's a different style than we've seen. I am glad it's in Carver-Hawkeye Arena, and I think we'll have a great crowd on Thursday night.

In Cancun, we had three games in three days and our players' focus was very good. They prepared for each game like they were preparing for the Big Ten championship. That's what I like to see out of this team, is their intensity for each opponent; and that carried through on the floor for every game.

It was a good win over USC and Boston College and easy to let down against UNC Wilmington because on paper we were the better team, and we didn't. We played hard the entire game, and I was glad to see that. That's easy for a person to do when they've played three games in three days is to let down when you know you're better than your opponent, and they didn't do that.

Melissa getting all-tournament MVP was a nice honor for her, and Sam being on all-tournament team, she did a great job of leading us. We had some special performances in there, but this week we're glad to be back in Carver-Hawkeye Arena because we haven't been there in a while.

Are you surprised that Ally Disterhoft has been able to contribute so much, so early?

She has amazed us. You bring in freshman because you think they're going to be good players, but they're freshman, so you never know. They're up one game and down another game. Her level of consistency has been remarkable and her ability to go in and take contact and get rebounds for us. I am happy with the way she has been playing and the consistency she has been giving us.

Do you think that comes from her competitiveness?

She is competitive and more athletic than you think. People look at her and think she is a skinny girl. She is much more physical and athletic than you'd think she would be. That's showing up in the rebounding area.

Does she have to continue to do this for this team to be successful?

We all do. It's important for Ally to continue what she has been doing, but also Alexa continues to get better. We don't have huge numbers, so we need everyone to contribute.

Does the balance of this team help overcompensate for the lack of depth?

We've have good balance. We had five players in double figures in one game. It could be a different person every night -- Sam could lead us one night, Bethany another and Melissa... I like that. Claire went in and played great minutes against USC. It is different people stepping up at different times.

What changed for Melissa (Dixon) prior to the Cancun Challenge?

The shots went in for her. There was nothing that like they weren't guarding her or she changed something technically. With shooters, it is confidence and getting on that roll, knowing the ball is going in the hole and seeing yourself perform well. Once she hit a couple at the end of the BC game that helped.

How nice was it to start to see some of those shots go in for Melissa?

It made me feel good. It's not that I was worried about Melissa, I felt bad for Melissa. I know how much pressure she started putting on herself, and I didn't want her to do that. That's the worst thing you can do as a shooter is to start to question or think about it too much. Instead, you have to see it in and know it's in. She has shot that shot thousands and thousands of times so it's just a matter of time before she gets in that rhythm and feels good about it.

You are doing so much well right now, especially offensively. What do you see that we may not, that you need to improve?

We could crash better and get more offensive rebounds. I love the way we're passing the ball, we're doing a good job with that. We're starting to shoot better; we have to get consistent over time. We're doing a lot of good things well offensively, pushing the ball well.

Ranked in the top 25 now; is it important for this team to be ranked?

It's a nice pat on the back for a job well done. That's how we look at it. We congratulate the team and now we're on to the next opponent because they're ranked a little higher than we are. It's a short-lived thing, but we take pride in it.

This team feels good about themselves, and for you to be successful, you have to feel good about yourself. I don't think they need the ranking to prove that to themselves.

What do you see in Syracuse?

They are a very good defensive team, and they get a lot of their offense from their defense. They're forcing 75 more turnovers than their opponents, and a lot of them end up being high percentage shots because they're out of their press and zone. They have the National Player of the Week on their team, and that's impressive.

Talk about not only being the ACC Player of the Week, but the National Player of the Week that you have to come in and defend. They shoot the 3-ball well and defensively they throw so many presses at you. That's the thing we spent a lot of time working at today. We're going to see full-court, three

quarter court and different half-court presses, and double teams coming on the floor. That isn't something we've prepared for a lot up to this point.

Is there an advantage to have this game at home?

We've been away from Carver for so long. We're both coming off trips where we were traveling out of the country and having three games in three days. Having the game at Carver, especially if we have a great crowd, will help us.

Is there any trick to trying to get the team re-focused after the trip to Cancun?

We had a day off yesterday off from practice and Sunday was a travel day. We had two days physically off the court. Today they were ready to go and we got to practice. They had been away from it for two days, so they were ready to get focused on Syracuse.

Both Iowa and Syracuse were not ranked last week, but now are. Other than the wins, is there anything from your team that has impressed the pollsters?

The competition we've played against lately, the Boston Colleges and USCs and being able to get wins there and only losing at Colorado by three points, a team ranked in top-20 as well. When you go out and face that competition and do well, that gets people's attention.

Syracuse has had great wins, beating Washington State on the road, beating Texas on neutral floor and Texas A&M by 15 points on a neutral court. A&M was ranked No. 11 at the time, that's a good decisive win, winning by 15 points. They're playing well and confident now. When you're undefeated at this time of year, that's a good feeling.