

February 15, 2011



An interview with:

COACH LISA BLUDER

COACH BLUDER: Only one game this week. But obviously it's an important game because we only play Wisconsin one time. I always think those ones have a little added importance when you only play them one time because if it does end up in a tie, you have the one opportunity. That was another good reason for our road win against Northwestern last week. Good win. We got two in a row now. It was on the road. So that was really good.

But Wisconsin 9-3 in the Big Ten, third place in the conference standings. Three seniors that are very important to their system and have a lot of experience. They've been starters for them almost since day one. They're a good defensive team, only giving up 56 points a game, which is extremely good.

A couple players that I think are outstanding, Alyssa Karel, point guard, senior, averaging 17 points a game. She just flat out can score. She can shoot the three, penetrate, beautiful floating jumper in the middle of the paint. Just a very, very nice player.

Then their center Lin Zastrow, 6'4", good size, but also very strong, averaging 16 points a game. After saying that, they're very balanced. They still have four people in double figures on this basketball team.

They're a good three-point shooting club. At the same time they've got an excellent high-low postgame, too, between Zastrow and Steinbauer. So they're a very, very nice team.

But I feel like we're hitting them at a good time, coming off of two wins. I hope we get a great crowd because right now we've done such a good job in attendance. It's our Think Pink game, which is always a little bit special, trying to bring awareness to breast cancer. There's a lot of

promotions going on. The Family Four Pack, kids are free, the giveaways. But just to be a part of this atmosphere and make it a great night for all those that are struggling or who have survived cancer is just a great opportunity for our players to be involved in this.

We're excited about the game.

Q. What kind of changes have you made defending the high-low since Ohio State did it to you a couple weeks ago?

COACH BLUDER: The one benefit is that these posts aren't as big as the Ohio State posts. We are talking about a 6'1" and a 6'4" player.

One thing that concerns me about this game is we have one day to prepare for Wisconsin. We took yesterday off. We need to after a week. They had a bye this week so they've had six days to prepare for us.

We have a lot to accomplish in practice today. That's a key that we have to worry about, is stopping that post high-low game.

Q. With you not playing Sunday, could you have taken a day off after Wisconsin?

COACH BLUDER: We could have, but we felt like going that long would have hurt us in the game on Wednesday. It's something we thought about. But to go from last Monday all the way through till a Thursday is a lot of days in a row for them to go. I thought for them physically and mentally it was best to take the day off even if it meant only having one day to prepare. That's a gamble.

Q. What do you have to do to put up points against such a good defensive team?

COACH BLUDER: We have to execute in our offense. They do a really good job of helping. They do a good job of taking away paint points. So hopefully our shooting will be in place like it was in the second half of the Northwestern game. We did an excellent job of that. We pushed the ball well against Northwestern.

I don't think we're going to change a lot of

our game plan that I'm going to talk about today at least, Wisconsin can read about it.

Q. Will you start out with Kachine or go zone?

COACH BLUDER: We'll go both. We like to mix it up. But Kachine will have a big responsibility in this game. I think Kelly Krei will as well.

Q. Wisconsin has had some success on the road in the conference. What are some of the keys for them when they leave Madison?

COACH BLUDER: They're 4-2 away from Madison, they're 5-1 in Madison. Their overall record is not indicative of how good they are. Their overall record, they struggled in non-conference play. The reason was is that their star players were out with injuries.

Since conference has been back, has started, those players are all healthy. So it's made a big difference in their performance.

Again, this is a senior-laden team. This is a team that their three key players are seniors. They've been on the road. They know what it's like to be in the Big Ten on the road. They don't get as intimidated going on the road as less experienced or younger teams. I think last year they had a great year. Tied with us for third in the conference. They're doing a really good job on the road.

Q. How big a deal is it, 20 wins to you, as a staff, as a team?

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, I think it still has a little bit of that glamour. It did 10 and 20 years ago. You get to 20 wins, you're in the NCAA tournament. I don't think that holds true as much as it used to, that it's a magical number to get you in. But it certainly has a good ring to it. It certainly has a good ring to it to the media and to the fans that you're a 20-win season.

If we make it to 20 wins, would this be four in a row for us?

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

COACH BLUDER: Now we're talking about tradition. That's pretty exciting.

Q. Also be the earliest you've gotten to 20 since you've been at Iowa.

COACH BLUDER: I didn't realize that. I think that's terrific. For our players, we can keep building on this. Right now our RPI sits at 17 in the country. We're closing in on the 20 wins. I think

this helps set us up for that good seed in the NCAA tournament.

Q. Is this about as important of a game as you've had all season considering where you sit in the standings?

COACH BLUDER: With me the next game is always the most important. This is as important as the Northwestern game was there. So the next one is as incredibly important.

But, you know, when you're looking at these last three games, we want to get them all. That's just it. But we know we got to do it one at a time.

Q. Do you ever give yourself a chance to think about the new offices, new practice facility, on a drive home, Wow, here we go?

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, it's exciting. Actually, my drive home doesn't take me by it. I did see it during the men's game. They showed it. We were on the bus driving home from Northwestern. We were able to watch the men's game. They showed the backside of Carver, what that looks like. The bus kind of oooh'd and aaaw'd a little bit.

It's exciting when you think about it. In fact, this Friday we're trying to arrange a tour through there for our team so that they can see it and start envisioning what it's going to be like because I want them to be excited about it. This is for them.

It's going to help with recruiting. It going to help them get in the gym and shoot more, give them a really comfortable place that they're really proud of. I think they need to see it in progress.

Q. Is it possible all three teams could practice at the same time?

COACH BLUDER: It would be possible. May not be ideal, but it would be possible because there is going to be a divider that would divide the two courts in the practice facility. So it's possible. I see that happening maybe more with individual workouts, men having one side and the women having the other side for individual workouts. I don't see us having full-blown practices all three at once.

Q. Speaking of Northwestern, how many times have you been asked if you can package your halftime speech from that game?

COACH BLUDER: We just asked them to play with a little more energy really. I just felt like the energy wasn't high in the first half. That was kind of one of our keys. That was our theme going into the game, we wanted to play with high energy, and we weren't doing it.

The second half, they totally turned that around. I thought Kamille really got us going with that. I thought Kamille pushed the ball hard in the second half. She brought that energy. It's contagious. Sometimes you just need that one person to really push the envelope on it. I thought she did a really good job against Northwestern.

Q. How do you carry that kind of energy over into another game?

COACH BLUDER: I wish we had more time to prepare for this game because I would have put a highlight film together showing all the great clips on the offensive side of things. With today being one, getting ready for Wisconsin, we're not going to be able to do that. Maybe I can get something set up before tomorrow's game.

But I think they have to have that feeling again, the memory of what it was like, how good it felt, what they were doing. I think having visual clips of that is really instrumental. Nick has actually put some things for us together in the past, so maybe I'm going to hit him up after this.

Q. Last two games Kelsey has had 15 points and a late-spot start. Talk about her contributions.

COACH BLUDER: Kelsey, here she is a senior, two home games left. She's not ever had the star role ever since she's been at Iowa. But she's one of those people that has made a huge impact on this team, and nobody knows about it except for the coaches and the players. They respect her so much for her leadership, for her positive outlook, her organization. She's the one that gets everybody in the summers ready for the scrimmages, holds people accountable, make sure all the freshmen have rides places. You have to have a player like that on your team, and she's been that for us.

So now to see her actually get a little bit of the glory as well is really satisfying because she was a big part of our Northwestern win. She took Amy Jaeschke to the hole for a layup once, comes back with a three-pointer, because now Amy was sagging off of her. She has a great layup in the Minnesota game. That's been really fun to see

because she's a great kid, a wonderful human being.

Q. For years you didn't have a practice facility. Then you could only talk about it. Does it make a difference now taking recruits are talking about it now that it's almost done?

COACH BLUDER: Absolutely. This fall even we took recruits through it even though it was just a shell because they could see it was there, it was coming, it was going to be their in their time. Jane Meyer was great at accommodating us on all the asks we made of her to get recruits through that building. It was very important last fall. It's going to be important in the future.

Q. Are the recruits going to play this summer, all five of them?

COACH BLUDER: I would envision that all five of them will, yeah. I haven't thought that far ahead yet. I don't see any reason why any of them would not play.

Q. Do you like having a bye this late in the season? What do you plan to do?

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, you know, the byes always throw a little kink into things. Ours is stretched out longer this time. The first time we had a bye, it was stretched out into an eight-day situation. This time it's stretched into an eight-day again. I think that's a little bit too long, to be honest, because our game is moved to Wednesday instead of Thursday. We have eight days between games. I don't really care for it this time of year.

It's nice if you have injuries. It's nice if you need rest. That part of it, give them a little break away from basketball, maybe two days off in a row which they haven't had for a long time. That's kind of nice for the players.

But I think you can get a little rusty, too. I don't like that. You're not putting a whole lot new in at this point. You're really choring up on your fundamentals a little bit during that week. It's not like we're going to gain a lot of strength over that week or anything like that. It's really trying to break, give them more of a mental and physical break more than anything else.

It could be a good time of the year to do that going into the last two games and the Big Ten tournament.

Q. Talk about next year as far as how you'll handle the Big Ten schedule. Will it be the Legends and Leaders stuff?

COACH BLUDER: I'm not sure how much we can talk about that.

What I do know is there are going to be five teams we're going to play twice and six teams to we're going to play once. We're going to maintain our 16 games. We're not going to do the Leaders and Legends. It's going to be like it is now, just done with computer, randomly thrown out, who you're playing the single games against, who you're playing the double games against. That would be for two years. It flip-flops. You have the home and away between the two years, then it will all be spit out by the computer again.

Q. If you have that format, wouldn't it make more sense to play it along the divisional lines?

COACH BLUDER: I would have enjoyed the divisional lines I think. I don't know if I would have liked the Leaders and Legends things. The east/west thing I would have liked. I like the border rivalries. Those are the states that we recruit more from. Those are the states that we play in more often. But it's not going to be that way.

Q. Hannah?

COACH BLUDER: Hannah will be good to go for Wednesday night.

Q. That had to be tough adjusting to the goggles that first game.

COACH BLUDER: It's hard. You go from contacts to wearing goggles. You have some sight lines that aren't as good. She never played in them in her entire life. It's a big adjustment to go from them. But she's not complaining, not at all. She wears them around her neck a little bit too much for me in warmups.

Q. Trisha near a hundred percent?

COACH BLUDER: Trisha is nowhere near a hundred percent. She sometimes doesn't get through all the practices. She's in pain. It hurts. So, unfortunately, that's the way it's going to be this year for her.

Q. I don't think we met with you since Samantha Logic was named a McDonald's All-American.

COACH BLUDER: She was at our game against Northwestern. She and Melissa Dixon

were both there. We had former players there, parents. It felt really good. We had two full buses that came over for that game. I think we had almost as many fans as Northwestern did. For certain, they were louder.

It was a really neat environment to go on the road and have that kind of a feel. But definitely having Sam and Melissa there was special, as well. It's good, because now they can see themselves wearing that Iowa uniform. They're both donned in their Iowa attire. So that was pretty neat. It will be fun to watch her. It will be fun to support her during the McDonald's game, the WBCA All-America game. It's a great tribute to her and our program as well that she was selected to that.

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