

January 8, 2014



An interview with:

## COACH BLUDER

COACH BLUDER: I guess if there's one good thing about losing, it makes winning feel a whole lot better. That was a happy locker room. We needed to get back on the winning track, and I am really happy with the way we did it tonight. We hit our free throws, which was important because we got there often and we needed to convert and we did. I thought Theairra (Taylor) played a great game for us; maybe her best of the year. I thought Bethany (Doolittle) did a good job attacking inside, getting to the free throw line.

For us to have more paint points than them is very good. It's pretty telling, because I have a lot of respect for their center and I'm really happy with that statistic.

**Q. Coach, earlier in the week you were saying you guys needed to get that energy back. How did you feel about it? Do you think it's back in a sense?**

COACH BLUDER: I thought it was tonight. Now it's got to be a consistent thing. It's got to happen every day in practice. It's got to happen every time in the game whether we're home or on the road. We go on the road to play at Madison on Sunday.

I thought it was there tonight. We've got to keep it there in practice on Friday and Saturday and the game on Sunday.

**Q. Playing against the best scoring defense in the league, what did you do to exploit that and get some points in the paint?**

COACH BLUDER: We tried to drive hard. We tried to use the dribble-drive to get into the paint, not just using a back to the basket type of thing, but also using the dribble-drive. That's to us a higher percentage shot. I thought when their

centers got into foul trouble and Beth (Doolittle) did a really good job going to work in there. You get four fouls and you don't want to foul. You don't want to sit down. I thought she did a really nice job of attacking bigger posts in that situation.

**Q. How important was Theairra's offensive production in the first half when others were struggling to make shots?**

COACH BLUDER: I thought it was huge. I thought Thea did a great job attacking tonight. I'm just really happy for her because I thought she did a great job getting to the rim tonight and she hit a couple threes for us too.

**Q. (No Microphone)?**

COACH BLUDER: Really, we talked about how to break their zone down a little bit more and they didn't play it that much in the second half. We thought they might play a lot more zone in the second half because I thought it was pretty effective in the first half. But we talked about how we were going to attack that more than anything. Then the rebounds are still a concern for us. No. 32 got way too many offensive rebounds. So we talked about that a lot. But just really keep attacking.

**Q. How did you feel about your defensive efforts overall?**

COACH BLUDER: You know, Banham got a lot of points and she's going to get hers. We talked about it as a team, kind of like they're a two-person show. But we take great pride in our balance. We like that. We like that we're a balanced team. Those two are pretty darn good though. They're very good. I thought Rachel got hers, and that's going to happen.

But for us, the most important thing is we've got the win versus how many points one person got.

**Q. Is it nice to get the monkey off the back with that first conference win and go from here?**



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COACH BLUDER: I thought our three-point defense was a lot better in the second half too. I don't think they scored a three until the last minute of the game and they scored four of them in that minute. When it was crunch time and it really counted, I thought we defended the three a lot better in the second half than we did in the first half.

**Q. Is that the type of energy you're looking for though?**

COACH BLUDER: Absolutely.

**Q. What energy are you looking for?**

COACH BLUDER: I thought we played with a lot more energy tonight. We played with a lot more focus. We had less mental breakdowns in this game than we've had in the past couple of games. So I thought we were just really dialed in mentally. I thought we played with great energy, and that's what we have to do every night because we feed off of that. We feed off of that.

**Q. In two different times, one in the end of the first half and midway through the second they had an 8-0 or first half a big run. You guys responded to that. So what's that say about the team's resiliency to overcome something like that and get back on top?**

COACH BLUDER: You'd like to have lessons like that happen especially when they end up in Ws. But the two good runs that they had at us and we responded every time. We battled back every time and took it over again, so very happy about that. Sometimes you can tank in those situations, and you can kind of start worrying about things instead of focusing on the next play. I thought we did a good job of, okay, that's over. Focus on the next play.

**Q. You've struggled at the free-throw line. Today 26 of 28, was that a point of emphasis for you?**

COACH BLUDER: Point of emphasis for us. We are a good free-throw shooting team, and we have not shown it this year. We've been talking about it, yeah. We need to do a better job at the free-throw line. So we did today. We need to keep it up and have consistency in that area.

**Q. Coach, you were a little concerned about the way the schedule played with three games or especially this game with Minnesota.**

**How did you overcome that or in preparing for that?**

COACH BLUDER: Well, we went pretty light on Monday, and I think that was good for their legs just because we haven't had a day off since before the first Big Ten game now. Three days before the first Big Ten game, so it's been a long time.

So playing at home definitely helped. The energy of our crowd definitely helped. But I think having Monday off and being smart with their legs is probably a good thing.

But the energy that -- sometimes, you know, you're 20 years old, you forget about that stuff and just play with great energy. It's amazing. You forget how tired you are and you just play hard.

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