

**January 11, 2011**



An interview with:

## **COACH BLUDER**

COACH BLUDER: There's a lot of stuff going on, but first is Michigan State. We know this is a tough scenario. This is probably our toughest road game since North Carolina, and that one didn't end up the way we wanted it to, so we hope to reverse the trend and have a different outcome on this one.

Michigan State is a good basketball team. Right now I know they're at the top of the Big Ten. And I do the Midwest regional ranking, and I have them as the best team in the Big Ten right now.

They all shoot the three; they're very physical. I thought they would have dropped a little bit this year, but they haven't. They are playing, I think, more competitively than they did last year.

And we're kind of in the same situation. We really wanted to get Ohio State. We lost to them on their court, lost to them in the Big Ten tournament. Now to spin the tables here, Michigan State has the same thing. Maybe they've had an O on their mirror all summer long, just like we had an O on our mirror all summer long.

They want to get us. We beat them twice last year. We beat them on our court. We took them out of the semifinals in the Big Ten tournament and I'm sure they have a little bit of animosity about that in the way we ended their Big Ten tournament run.

So we know it is going to be a physical game. It always is with Michigan State, especially going to their place it's going to be a difficult battle.

Sunday, hosting Indiana, I honestly don't know anything about Indiana yet. I haven't watched them play one time, so I don't know

anything about them. I do know we've got a lot of great promotions going on. I think that again we're doing a super job of getting great fan support here.

That Ohio State crowd was wonderful. It was the best feeling I've had in Carver Hawkeye Arena since I've been here with just the incredible atmosphere. And, hopefully, we can keep that going because we only have two Sunday home games left, the Indiana game and then Penn State in February. So it's going to be a while before we have a Sunday home game again.

Hopefully people will come out and see us at 1:00 against Indiana, and kids are in free as long as they wear a jersey. So there are a lot of good things going on that should bring people out.

**Q. Where do you have your team ranked in the Midwest rankings?**

COACH BLUDER: Oh, I'm not going to say. I'll tell you it's the in the Top 10.

**Q. You said the Ohio State game you thought the crowd made the most noise ever for a jump ball?**

COACH BLUDER: You know, it was just fun. They were so excited. This crowd just got excited about everything. It didn't matter what it was. If it was in Iowa's favor, it could have been the littlest detail, but they were excited about it.

**Q. Michigan State obviously lost their big girl. How are they different now? Is this team just a lot like last year's team without them?**

COACH BLUDER: They're a lot like last year's team without her, but they're more balanced. They've got Brittney Thomas back who was out last year with an ACL, and she's their leader on their team. I thought when she went down last year that really hurt their team. Allyssa DeHaan wasn't as productive at the end of last year because of the back injuries that she was facing.

Keane is doing an unbelievable job. She is shooting threes, she's posting up, she's scoring at a high rate, and she's so hard to guard because she's, you know, an extremely wide body. But she can move it. She's got the ability to be able to move her body. She is a very hard match-up for a lot of people.

**Q. Is Trisha getting better with energy and wind and being in shape?**

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, that's always a struggle for people getting back off injuries and how to get back in shape. You have to walk a fine line of trying to get back in shape, but not go so hard that you don't have your legs for the next game. It's always harder getting in shape this time of the year than it is in the beginning of the year.

Now she had a cold this week so that doesn't help matters. But I'm sure the more times she gets on the floor, the more comfortable she becomes. It's going to make our team a lot better. We're 2-0 with Trisha Nesbitt back in the lineup.

**Q. You said Jaime seems to play more comfortable at the two, and in the last two games she's kind of shown it?**

COACH BLUDER: I think that Jaime just having to worry about one position is a good thing. I think Jaime does a great job at point guard, and I won't have any qualms if we need to go back with her, to go back with her. But at the same time, if we can rest Kamille that four, five minutes a game -- and really that's all Kamille needs is that four or five minutes a game -- and to get Trisha Nesbitt in there and not have to worry about using Jaime in those minutes, it helps us all out a little bit. And I think it gives Jaime a little peace too.

**Q. Has Kamille played a lot better the last two games? Has that been a factor with Trisha back just knowing she's got kind of a safety valve on the bench?**

COACH BLUDER: It could be. I haven't thought about that, but it really could be. There is no doubt Kamille has played really well the last two games, and maybe it is just that ease of knowing I do have somebody that can come in and help me out if I need it.

But Kamille has played I think very well the last two games. I'm proud of her effort. I think Jaime's played well. But I feel like the last three halves that we've played were kind of back in that offensive like how we were playing at the end of last year, and that feels really good.

And we're going to have to play really well to get a win at Michigan State. It's a tough place to win. They're a good basketball team, and they rebound the ball so well too. I think that's going to be one of the best defensive teams in the Big Ten as well, so it will really be a test there Thursday night.

**Q. The team shot the three well against Ohio State. Can you put your finger on what was going on before that? Are they getting shots in different spots?**

COACH BLUDER: No, and we really track whether we feel it's a bad shot because we don't want our kids taking bad shots, and we bring it to their attention when they're taking bad shots. We also bring it to their attention when they're good shots and they're just not going in.

You're not going to make every shot, and as long as you're taking good shots, that is really the thing that I'm the most concerned with. Sometimes you want to reward the effort and the decision making rather than the result, because pretty soon the result's going to get there.

You'll hear me a lot of times, a kid misses a good shot, and I'm going to yell to them it's a good shot because I want to reinforce in their mind what they did was right. They did the right thing, it just wasn't the result we wanted. But I don't want them to start questioning whether they should shoot or not. I want them to understand that was a good shot. Take those good shots, and they'll go in for us eventually.

**Q. Michigan State's only loss is to Baylor. Have you had a chance to look at that game to see anything that Baylor did? Obviously they're extremely talented, but have you seen anything in that game that you could possibly use?**

COACH BLUDER: I did not watch that game. That was the third game of the year, and that was so long ago that teams really adjust and change a lot since that point.

Baylor is a good team. A loss to Baylor is nothing to be ashamed of. And, quite honestly, what Baylor can do, maybe we can't do. They have some tools that maybe we don't have. So we just have to -- we're watching all the films that are working.

Michigan played them really well. Michigan played them very well, and that's a game

that interests me a lot because we just played Michigan and I think Michigan is a good defensive team.

**Q. Why has the penetration been so much more against Ohio State?**

COACH BLUDER: I think it had to do with the way they were playing defense, and what their emphasis was in taking away the three more than the dribble drive. So different coaches have different styles in how they teach defense, and that worked to our benefit last Saturday.

**Q. Back to Kamille. How did she respond to what happened in the Michigan game when you benched her for an extended period of time? Did you say anything after the game?**

COACH BLUDER: We definitely talked about it the next day. We watched film together the next day and we talked about the issue. She handled it extremely well. Kamille, she's a competitor. She wanted to be on the floor. There is no doubt she wanted to be on the floor, and it was the coach's decision that we had the best lineup.

Sometimes players disagree with what the coaches decide on and that's tough. You don't always agree with your boss. That is kind of life, isn't it? And I think that's a good life lesson to learn.

**Q. It would have been easy for her to go in the tank after that, but how was she able to respond and come back so well against Minnesota?**

COACH BLUDER: That is her maturity and competitiveness. Her ability to put team first over what she wants. That is what makes this team so much fun to coach is because they are team first rather than individual first, and that's what wins us games.

**Q. You know, Kalli and Hannah both hit one three, that seemed to really give your kids a spark?**

COACH BLUDER: I agree with you. We had more bench points than Ohio State. That is exciting for us. I think Kalli Hansen is coming in and doing a great job for us right now. And Kalli can play the four or the three, so that's nice. She played significant minutes in the last two wins for us. And I think she's playing well.

She plays just strong, maturely. She's got a little bit of an edge to her, I think, that is good out there. Little grit to her that I really like. Hannah, you know, it's nice to see her getting her shot back and feeling more comfortable with that because she was in a little bit of a slump there too.

**Q. Kalli it appears that she's used to being the star in high school and junior college and now she's sitting for a lot of minutes and coming off the bench. What is it about her mentality that enables her to do that?**

COACH BLUDER: That's a hard adjustment too what you're doing. That's why we're careful recruiting junior college players. It is so hard for them. They go from playing a ton of minutes a game and being a superstar to come in here and maybe not starting.

The scenario that Kalli's in, I mean, she was an All American. She won two national titles her freshman and sophomore years. Then to come here and not be a starter, I'm sure has to be very hard for her to handle.

You know, I think Kalli really respects her teammates. I think she sees how hard they all work, and she knew she had some things to learn about our offense and the way we play defense, which might be totally different than what they did at Kirkwood.

So there was a growing curve that she had to adjust to, and I think she's adjusted to it now and is doing really well. As far as her mentality, I think you can see she's handled it really well.

It just goes back that we have the right type of kids on this team leading it too that show how to handle those situations so that if you're ever in them, this is the way we handle it here. She's done a really good job because I don't think that would be an easy thing to do at all.

**Q. Did you look at her at all out of high school?**

COACH BLUDER: We went to watch her play, but didn't look at her seriously out of high school, but we did go watch her.

**Q. Three straight 20-win seasons, a good start this year. How does that relate into recruiting with the sophomore and junior class? Are you getting a good response?**

COACH BLUDER: We feel we have some really good people that are interested in us in the

sophomore and junior classes, and we're working hard at it. You just never can predict these things.

You can be looking at all the right kids, but it may not matter in the end. Recruiting is just really, really hard, and it is probably the bread and butter of what we do.

**Q. Did Iowa (indiscernible) have some decent talent that maybe there are a few Hawkeye fans out there?**

COACH BLUDER: I would not say it is the best years we've ever had coming up in the state. But there are always a couple of players in the state that can play at the top level. Not a ton like in other states like Minnesota or Ohio or Illinois. But there are always a couple in this state that can do a good job. This year we had quite a few and unfortunately a few of them went out of state.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about that. Some really high-profile kids went to Stanford, Connecticut, Notre Dame, elsewhere. Is there anything going on there or are these just individual decisions by individual kids that think these are sort of the best?**

COACH BLUDER: I don't think you're ever going to blame a kid for choosing a top two or three university, top one, two, or three university over their hometown school. Everybody would love to keep them in state. The fans would love it. We would love it.

But when kids have the opportunity to play for the very best places in the country that are proven right now, I don't think anybody, if you were in their shoes, maybe you'd have that look too.

As far as Stanford, it is one of the best academic universities in America as well. So they have a lot of things going for them. I think it just shows that we have those type of schools coming into our state to recruit. It shows a lot of respect, but I wish they'd stay back over there.

**Q. What is going on with Jade Rogers?**

COACH BLUDER: Just a typical freshman year. I think Jade went through a time where she was struggling, but I think she's getting it now. She's understanding and getting better in practice. She knows that's where she's got to get better first and foremost, but she's having your typical freshman year.

Last year's freshman year for our class was very atypical. You don't want your freshmen to come in -- not that many of them by any means -- come in and be starters on your team.

You don't want to make that a pattern. You'd rather have your freshmen come in, learn the system.

Right now she's our third five. Morgan is our number one five, Kelsey's our number two five, and Jade's our number three five. It's hard to be number three because you don't get that much playing time when you're number three.

But we feel like Jade's in the best position she should be, and that is playing the five. When we first started her here we thought she could play the four for us. But after being in practice, she was better suited for the five in our system. So she's at the five right now, and, again, she's learning and doing well and maintaining a positive attitude which, again, is a really hard thing to do.

Here's a kid that was All State and had all these minutes. Now you come here and you just saw Jaime and all your friends competing as a freshman, and now you come and you're sitting as a freshman. That's hard, and I commend her for the way she's handling it.

**Q. How tough is it to be a five in this league at 5'11" or 6-foot?**

COACH BLUDER: It's hard but it's not impossible. You look at Michigan their post is 6'1" and Michigan State's post is 6'1". It's hard, but not impossible. The bigger kids are getting more and more scarce. It is hard to find them.

I think within our system and the way we run our offense, you can be successful. I don't think everybody's offense you can be successful, but I think you can in ours because of the way we play our post and so many different positions where they actually face up instead of playing with their back to the basket.

**Q. What is going on in the Big Ten this year do you think? You guys always say -- I mean coaches always say this is really tough every week.**

COACH BLUDER: Coach speak, is that what you're saying?

**Q. Yeah, but this year it's really borne out?**

COACH BLUDER: You just look at what Northwestern's done. They were in the bottom of the league for so long. You kind of pencil in a W there, and if everything goes well, you don't get the flu, you're going to get it. If your team doesn't get

the flu, you're going to get it.

Now they're playing great basketball. Their RPI's in the top 25 in the country right now. That just shows you what on our league has done.

Michigan went through big time struggles and their RPI is like number 14 in the country right now. So there are no bottom dwellers in our league anymore. I look at the Big Ten and Big 12 RPI's right now, the individual, it's not even a comparison between the Big Ten and the RPI's and how successful we were in our non-conference. And the people we were playing compared to the Big 12 and who they were playing and what their records were.

Their strength of schedule, some of them are in the 200's. I think Michigan's strength of schedule is 5. That's amazing. So I think the Big Ten coaches have done a great job of going out and scheduling. There's been some really good coaches hires that have really brought the bottom end of this conference and brought it up. It's a tough league.

**Q. Can you lose four or five games and still maybe be the top dog?**

COACH BLUDER: I think you're going to see that this year.

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