

**October 17, 2012**



An Interview With:

## **COACH LISA BLUDER**

LISA BLUDER: Good morning. I want to thank everybody for being here and the time you all commit to covering our basketball program, I really appreciate it. So thank you for being here.

I just want to make a special acknowledgment to John Campbell. Thanks, John. I understand you're retiring. I appreciate all the hard work that you've done over the years representing the community. Just done a super job, so thanks for that, and look forward to our last media day together.

Our goal this year is to open the season by winning a tournament game at home and end the season by winning tournament games at home. It's not very often that you get the opportunity to host national tournaments bookending your season. We've accepted an invitation to play in the preseason WNIT tournament, and we are guaranteed to host the first two rounds here in Carver-Hawkeye Arena. We've also been awarded the NCAA first and second round tournaments, and that's great honor, and we want to make the most of both of those tournaments being held here in Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

We're optimistic that we're going to be able to do that because we return four starters from last year and also are welcoming five newcomers to our basketball team.

We're anchoring that with Sam Logic. Again, Sam will be our leader on the floor. Last year she was a unanimous All-Big Ten selection to the Big Ten team. She started every game for us last year. She led our team in assists, as you would expect of your point guard, but she also led our team in rebounds, which just shows you the physical style and the grit that she plays with.

Melissa Dixon returns to our starting lineup. Melissa Dixon stepped into that role when Jaime Printy went down last year, and she stepped in and our team never missed a beat with her moving into the starting lineup.

We return Morgan Johnson to our starting lineup. Morgan Johnson I think is one of the best centers in the United States. Morgan last year was the seventh best field goal percentage shooter in the nation, and she was 26th best in blocked shots. I love coaching her. I love coaching a kid that comes to practice every day with that much enthusiasm and positive attitude and just love for the game and love for life. She is wonderful to have on the court.

And then the big question probably everybody is wondering about is Jaime Printy and will she be back, and I can tell you Jaime will be in a uniform on November 9th when we open up on our first game against Northern Illinois. I can't tell you if she'll be 100 percent at that point. I can tell you that she's working as hard as she can to get to that point, and I can tell you that I have 100 percent belief in her when she shoots the ball and that she will help our team reach our goals.

We also return Trisha Nesbitt, one of our seniors, one of our tri-captains. Finally Trisha is having the opportunity to play healthy, and she's playing very well for us right now.

Theaira Taylor, she'll be an impact player for us, there's no doubt about that. She is taking off right from where she left last year in that NCAA Tournament game against California.

We have Bethany Doolittle. She's going to be a big impact player for us, as well, this year. She's more versatile, more confident as a sophomore. We may even move her to the power forward position and out of the center position to add some more height to our basketball team and give her the opportunity to have extra minutes on the floor.

And then we add five newcomers to our

basketball team. Claire Till is the lone lowman from Dubuque Wahlert. Claire can play the 3 or the 4 position for us this year, an outstanding offensive rebounder.

We are bringing in Kayla Timmerman. She is from Minnesota and will be a center for us this year, and she's getting more and more comfortable with playing with her back to the basket. Every day I see improvement.

We're bringing in Nicole Smith, a center from Illinois. Nicole is a little slow because of the ACL surgery that she had last spring, but she's moving along nicely with that surgery. We expect to use her this year and not to medically red shirt her.

We are bringing in Kali Peschel, a wing player. She can really play a 2, 3 or 4 for us. I expect that she's going to be in the mix of things right away. She's a very good player, and we need to have Kali Peschel on the floor even as a freshman.

And then we have a newcomer, a transfer, Kathy Thomas from Highland Community College, she's an All-American junior college player, originally from Flint, Michigan, and Kathy was a really good sign for us last spring. With Kathryn Reynolds going down with the ACL we did not have that backup point guard, and Kathy Thomas is going to do a fabulous job for us at that position. She will definitely see minutes on the floor and contribute in that fashion.

Schedule this year: Again, one of these years I am going to get the knack for this and maybe schedule a little bit easier, but again, we have a very, very difficult schedule. In addition to preseason WNIT, we're also hosting UNI and Iowa State in the in-state battle games. We're also hosting Missouri State, one of the top teams if not the top team in the Missouri Valley Conference.

We're in two very competitive tournaments. We are going to Florida to play at Florida International in a tournament there. Other people in that tournament include, LSU and West Virginia, so a very good tournament and opportunity for us to play top caliber women's basketball teams on a neutral court.

And then over Christmas we go out to San Diego, and we'll play in a tournament out there. Our first-round opponent will be Texas; again, another opportunity to play a great team from the Big 12 on a neutral court. And then the other teams in that tournament are San Diego and Central Michigan.

So again, a tremendous schedule. The Big Ten-ACC Challenge takes us to Florida State to play on the road there. Again, one of the top women's basketball teams in the country.

So we have our work cut out for us, but we're excited about it. We think we have the people to compete very well and want to make full opportunity of hosting those two tournaments his in Carver-Hawkeye arena.

**Q. Sam Logic made a jump when Jaime went down to a different level of play. Where is she now?**

LISA BLUDER: She's right there. She made that jump, and it wasn't jump and go back down; it was -- she's staying there. She has confidence right now. As a sophomore she just feels like she's leading the team. She's not one of our captains, but she certainly is valuable in her leadership role. She's just playing -- again, looking to score more, she's physical, she understands what we want out of her, and she's just going to be a very good player for us this year in my opinion.

**Q. Does Morgan take it as a challenge or get upset that someone else has led the team in rebounding for the last few years?**

LISA BLUDER: I've never talked with Morgan about that, but it's got to bug you a little bit when you're the tallest player on the team and you don't have the most rebounds. But Morgan is right there. I mean, she's one of our top rebounders, as well. It's hard for me to find any fault with Morgan Johnson and how much she contributes to our basketball team.

**Q. Talk about Bethany stepping up this summer. She seemed like she was aggressive on the offensive end and making great plays.**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, it's fun to see the progress that she made over the summer. She really is a different player now than she was last year, even from where she was at the end of last year. She's moving a little bit to the power forward position, which she's never played in her life, but she's accepted it, she's welcomed it, she's trying to learn it, and we just have to find a way to get her on the floor and more minutes because if she's strictly backing up Morgan, Morgan is on the floor a lot, and that limits Bethany's minutes. So I have to find a way to get Bethany on the floor, and I think this is the solution.

**Q. Is she going to play Game 1? I know she had a little bit of an incident over the summer.**

LISA BLUDER: She will be playing in Game 1.

**Q. 16 Big Ten teams, and ESPN ranks four Big Ten women's team in their top 25 preseason. Just your thoughts on another rugged, tough Big Ten season coming up again.**

LISA BLUDER: We play in one of the best conferences in America. When people come here, they understand that. They know what they're getting into, and they welcome it. We want kids that want to come here and compete against the very best. I wasn't kidding, we probably do over-schedule in our non-conference season because our conference is so good that you don't have to do that.

But we've done it in the past and our players have learned to welcome that, as well. The thing that you worry about is wearing down. You worry about that a little bit when you're playing against such good competition early. Sometimes people schedule a lot of gimmes to build confidence. I think kids are smarter than that. I think they understand you're supposed to win this game because it's a gimme or this is a very good opponent we're playing against, and we're going to have to play our very, very best. So I think kids are smarter than that anyway.

So we're going to try to compete and get ready for the Big Ten season with that non-conference.

**Q. Is Jaime where you thought she'd be at this point rehab wise?**

LISA BLUDER: I didn't exactly know where Jaime would be at this point. I'm just thrilled that I get to come to practice every day and she's on the court in a uniform because after going through two of those, you never know. She is trying so hard, and I admire her so much, and sometimes it's -- coming back mentally as well as physically from one of those, and she's doing a very good job of both aspects of approaching it. Jaime is going to be there for us. I don't know if she'll be in the starting lineup on November 9th, but I know that she'll be on the floor for us.

**Q. What part of Morgan's game has improved the most in four years?**

LISA BLUDER: Well, she's gotten so much stronger. I don't know if you remember her back in her freshman year and we were trying to put weight on her and trying to put muscle on her, and now she's really a good-sized player, but she's not so big that she's lost her mobility. She can still get up and down the court as well as any post. She's strong; she understands the physical style of the game.

That's what our freshmen have the biggest -- it's like a rude awakening; wow, this is this physical in Division I basketball? Well, she knows that now and she's dealing it out to our freshmen.

Morgan, when you're shooting that well, you just want to get the ball in her hands. She's so confident shooting the ball. Her freshman year, sophomore year, her confidence would waver at times if she'd miss some shots, and now she understands it's a part of the game. You're going to have some good things happen, you're going to have some bad things happen, and her ability to refocus and move on after something unfortunate happens is really good right now.

**Q. Talk about her as a shot blocker.**

LISA BLUDER: You know, she was 26th best in the country last year, and it's something that we don't even really stress with her game because in the first half quite honestly I don't want Morgan to block a whole lot of shots. I don't want her to pick up a couple of fouls and put herself on the bench. But the last 10 minutes of the game if she's got some fouls I don't mind her going after them. It's something she's very good at; she usually goes up pretty straight and doesn't get fouls when she blocks shots. So she's pretty smart at it, too. Sometimes people block shots and they send them out of bounds. That doesn't do a whole lot of good; the other team still has the ball. Morgan is very good at blocking shots and keeping it in play and the opportunity for Iowa to have it in their possession after a blocked shot.

**Q. Talk about the seniors on this team.**

LISA BLUDER: We have Morgan, Trisha and Jaime. They're our three co-captains, and they are doing a very good job and have really embraced the leadership role on this team. Yeah, these three girls have been through a lot. They've played a lot since their freshman year, and I have high expectations for them this year.

**Q. Four of the six first Big Ten games are at home and you only play Penn State once and it's in mid February. Just your thoughts on how the Big Ten schedule plays out for Iowa this year.**

LISA BLUDER: I don't really -- I never really sit and analyze the Big Ten schedule at this point. It's just a mirror of what it was last year. We only get to play Ohio State once, and we love the opportunity to play them on their home court, but I mean, it is what it is. You can't complain about it. It is what it is. Did you say four of our first six were at home? I didn't even know that. I haven't even looked that far ahead, and I think that gives us great momentum; as you said, it could provide us with some really good momentum, but then you always look at the other side of it; at the end of the year you're on the road a lot, too.

**Q. Three new coaches in the Big Ten, too, maybe some new offenses and things?**

LISA BLUDER: Three excellent coaches brought into the league with changes at Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. So it's going to change up your scouts a little bit and have to prepare for three different styles. Ironically we did play against the Michigan coach when she was at St. John's last year. We played them in the Virgin Islands when we were down there - that's where we were last year - and we beat them. And I think that's good, to set that tone early. But definitely Illinois and Indiana have some catch-up work to do, but excellent coaches. Excellent coaches have been brought into the league.

**Q. What was the thinking in having the second Christmastime tournament? You guys haven't done that before.**

LISA BLUDER: We have done that in the past, but the reason we were able to do that this year is because of the calendar and the way that it landed is that we don't start Big Ten until January 3rd this year, which is the latest that I can ever remember it starting, so it gave us some free time after Christmas, and so we were able to get those two games. And also with tournaments, you play two games right away, and when you're trying to fit in those non-conference games you have to get in some tournaments because otherwise you can't fit all of your games in.

So getting another tournament was good for that, as well.

**Q. How do your expectations of Samantha change as a sophomore as opposed to a freshman?**

LISA BLUDER: Now we know what we have. I guess as a freshman you don't really know what you have. You think you know; you recruited them for a certain reason; you believed in them, but you don't know for sure. And now you know what you have with Sam. Plus I know how she reacts. I know how she reacts to a bad call. I know how she reacts to something bad that happens to her on the floor or one of her teammates, and also know how she reacts when the chips are down and I need a basket or I need something good to happen.

**Q. How do you continue that growth now that the Big Ten knows what she is, too?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I mean, she's not a surprise to anybody anymore, you're right. Really nobody on our team will be a surprise to any in the Big Ten because I think we have so many veterans that will be playing that we don't have as many freshmen or new faces playing this year as we've had in the past. So there's not going to be any big surprises I don't think on our team this year except for some of the jumps that people have made like Theairra and Bethany. But you can know what you have to go against, but that doesn't mean you can stop it.

**Q. Who will be the most likely freshman or newcomer you'll play and why?**

LISA BLUDER: Kali Peschel. First of all, she's a darn good basketball player. Second of all, she's versatile, she can play a number of positions, so that always helps when you can play a number of positions. She's long; she's got long arms; she gets her hands on a lot of passes. She's not afraid to shoot outside; she's not afraid to penetrate. She is a competitor.

**Q. Last couple years seems like you kind of hit the wall and then just go crazy and win eight or nine straight. Is there something that goes on that clicks that everybody just finally gets on the same page?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I don't know. I hope we don't hit that wall this year. I just hope we just have a nice smooth roll down the season and we don't have any struggles that we have to get through like that. But I think any time that you

have freshmen in your lineup you're going to have some certain ups and downs. That's what being a freshman is all about.

But I've just always been really happy with the resilience of our team, and their ability to bounce back from adversity has been amazing. We've had super leadership. Our seniors have learned so much from their experiences, and I have great faith in them leading this team.

**Q. With Bethany at the four, do you guys change the offense at all or are you expecting her to be a 3-point shooter like Kelly?**

LISA BLUDER: Not so much a great 3-point shooter. That's hopefully going to come. It's not there right now. But Bethany has the opportunity to duck in and post-up any time. We all know she can do that. But she's also a nice target cutting to the basket, and we could tweak our offense a little bit. We're working on that right now, tweaking our offense a bit to accommodate her abilities to play inside.

**Q. And what do you guys do now when Morgan does need a rest? Do you shift her over?**

LISA BLUDER: We'll be working on either shifting her over to the 5 -- again, Bethany will play 4 and 5 for us, not just strictly the 4, and Kayla Timmerman will also back up the 5 position for us.

**Q. Is it more of an offensive or defensive mindset having Morgan and Bethany on the court at the same time?**

LISA BLUDER: It's both. It's nice defensively to have a couple of 6'4" players in there for rebounds, for long arms, deflections, tough to pass over. But at the same time, offensively, Bethany is more offensive minded this year than she was coming in here, and she's doing some great things offensively. It really is both.

**Q. Have you talked to the team about a possible sixth straight trip to the NCAA Tournament, and the fact it's going to be in Iowa City this year is that something that's a foregone conclusion?**

LISA BLUDER: We haven't talked about six straight, but we definitely have talked about NCAA Tournament and having the opportunity, and we just look at it as an opportunity, to play on our home court in front of the fabulous fans that we have. Last time we did this five years ago we had

the fourth best attendance of all 16 of the national sites. That just speaks volumes about our fans and their commitment to our team and also their commitment to women's basketball on a national scale.

I expect that we're going to have a great fan support again this year.

**Q. How much does that make it more the goal not just to get to the tournament but to win again at the tournament this year?**

LISA BLUDER: Well, and to get a seed. We all know it's one thing to make a tournament, it's another thing to have a good seed, and then we all know from the Gonzaga days, too, that a good seed doesn't necessarily mean that, because who knows where the other seeds are going to be. It's a toss-up. But we certainly understand that there's an advantage to playing at home. No matter what your seed is, no matter who your opponent is, there's an advantage to playing at home, and we want to make full use of that.

**Q. Last year the team shot 655 threes from behind the arc. Will the 3-pointer be another part of the arsenal this year?**

LISA BLUDER: Absolutely. That's who we are. When we recruit to our system, we definitely look for those type of players that are going to fit into our system. We love the 3-point shot, but we also want to get to the free-throw line because we're an excellent free-throw shooting team, so we are not just a 3-point shooting team.

I believe we get the ball into Morgan's hands very well. We were in the top 20 in the country in assists. We distribute the ball well. We were fourth best in free-throw shooting so we get to the free-throw line and we convert well there.

So it won't be definitely one-dimensional, but it's one of our weapons.

**Q. Speaking of free throws, Jaime Printy is one of the best free-throw shooters in program history, but do you want her charging to the basket all the time with her injury?**

LISA BLUDER: There's some things that we're kind of taking away from her, but that's not one of them. We want her to still attack the basket. That's a part of who Jaime is, and that makes her a better 3-point shooter is her ability to get to the basket, too. People can't play her tight all the time because she can get around them and people



can't play her soft all the time or she's going to shoot the 3-point shot, so her ability to get to the basket is definitely a part of her offensive weapons.

Now we aren't going to have her crash this year. We are going to take that away from her and not have her crash the offensive boards and take that -- that's actually where she got hurt, and I don't want that in her mindset, and I don't know that I can get her to fully commit to that, so she will be a player that will be back on defensive transition.

**Q. What's the role of Virginia and Jade in the program now that they're not playing?**

LISA BLUDER: They don't have a significant role. Basically Jade is helping us in the office, and we appreciate that extra work up there. And Virginia is helping out in the student service offices. Policy at Iowa, if you are not going to participate with the team anymore, you do have to do something for the athletic department, and I think that's fair. You have to do something to earn that scholarship, and I think they can learn some real good job skills by doing that, as well. So neither one of them have a significant role. Neither one of them will be traveling with our team.

**Q. Do you have a lineup in mind at all or are you kind of keeping that open, maybe Morgan and a couple others?**

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I think you can tell that Morgan and Sam are going to be starting for us. The 2, 3 and 4 are a little bit up in the air, although I'm feeling very good about Bethany at the 4, but the 2 and 3 are really up in the air. I have Theairra, I have Trisha, I have Jaime, I have Melissa, Kali Peschel. I have a lot to choose from. Isn't that a great problem for me? I have not had this problem in a long time. We might actually have to do some coaching.

**Q. Talk about Theairra. You mentioned earlier she's the player that's really made a leap along with Bethany. This is probably the furthest she's been away from any injury coming into this season. Can she play 30 minutes a game? Can she be the impact player she started to be her first nine games?**

LISA BLUDER: I believe she can. I think Theairra can play numerous minutes for us and be an impact player. I want that for her so badly.

That kid has been through so much and has just persevered and never-say-die attitude, and if there's any kid I would love to see her have

a great season, Theairra deserves it more than anybody.