



THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

SPORTS INFORMATION

Oct. 29, 2008

BIG TEN HOSTS BASKETBALL MEDIA DAY FOR MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

CHICAGO, IL – The Big Ten Conference hosted its annual “Basketball Media Day” Sunday morning at the O’Hare Marriott. All 11 men and women’s head coaches, along with student-athletes from each institution met the media for three hours.

Representing the Iowa Hawkeyes were head coaches Todd Lickliter and Lisa Bluder, along with student-athletes Kurt Looby, Seth Gorney, Justin Johnson, Wendy Ausdemore and Kristi Smith.

Lickliter is one of three new men’s coaches in the Big Ten (Michigan’s John Beilein and Minnesota’s Tubby Smith), while Bluder is now the dean of the Big Ten women’s coaches after Illinois’ Theresa Greutz and Penn State’s Rene Portland stepped down. Four league schools have new women’s coaches this year (Former Hawkeye, Jolette Law of Illinois; Suzy Merchant of Michigan State; Kevin Borseth of Michigan and Coquese Washington of Penn State).

On the men’s side, Michigan State was named as the pre-season favorite ahead of Indiana and defending champion Ohio State. Only the top three men’s teams were listed. Michigan State returns all five starters and eight lettermen from the team that posted a 23-12 record last season. Indiana returns three starters from a team that posted a 21-11 mark a year ago. Ohio State, which won both the regular season title and post-season conference tournament before advancing to the NCAA championship game, returns just one starter.

Michigan State’s Drew Neitzel was named the Preseason Player of the Year and was joined on the Preseason all-Big Ten team by Shaun Pruitt of Illinois, Indiana’s D.J. White, Ohio State’s Jamar Butler and Penn State’s Geary Claxton.

Media Day came one day after Iowa held its annual Black and Gold Blowout. “It was good to scrimmage in front of a crowd,” said Lickliter. “We know we have a ways to go to be ready, just because of the transition. But these guys work hard every day and are making progress to where we want to be.”

The Hawkeyes are aware that adjusting to a new coaching staff takes some time. “The transition has been smooth,” said senior guard Justin Johnson. “From the very start we’ve prepared mentally to adapt to the change. We know our defense, as a team, will play a key role in our success this season.”

Senior center Seth Gorney echoed Johnson’s feelings. “We have been helping each other from the start,” said Gorney. “Every member of the team will be contributing. There is no pressure on any individual. Our success will be based on how we help each other and perform as a team.”

The Hawkeye women, who tied for eighth last year with a young team with no seniors, were picked to finish fifth in the league by a selected media panel and seventh by the Big Ten coaches. Iowa returns all nine letterwinners and add four newcomers, including two with collegiate experience.

Ohio State, a team that has won or shared the last three Big Ten regular season championships, was picked to win the conference by both the media and coaches. The media selected Michigan State second, followed by Wisconsin (third) and Purdue (fourth). The coaches selected Wisconsin second, followed by Illinois (third), Michigan State (fourth), Purdue (fifth) and Minnesota (sixth).

Pre-season rankings don’t mean much to junior Kristi Smith, who was a third team all-Big Ten honoree a year ago.



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“I believe our team has the talent to finish in the top half of the conference,” said Smith. “But, we have to go out there, practice hard, prepare for every game and play our best. If we do that, the rest will fall into place.”

Wisconsin senior Jolene Anderson, who was the league’s leading scorer last season, was named pre-season Player of the Year by the coaches and media and was a unanimous choice to the all-Big Ten team by both groups.

With Iowa, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin returning all five starters, junior Wendy Ausdemore thinks the conference is as deep as it’s been in years and has high hopes for the Hawkeyes in 2007-08.

“Almost every team has the majority of their roster coming back, which makes each and every team that much more improved,” said Ausdemore. “That, coupled with us playing an 18-game schedule, means each game will be that much more important and every game will be a grind.

“We want to improve during the season and be one of the top teams in the conference. Not making the NCAA Tournament last year was tough and we want to do whatever it takes to get back there and make some noise.”

Like Ausdemore, Bluder sees the conference as being balanced and extremely competitive. Plus, with a number of new coaches in the league, it will be difficult preparing for those teams.

“With four new coaches in the conference we have to figure out their style of play and how they coach,” said Bluder. “There’s going to be a lot of adjustments that need to be made.”

Licklitter’s men’s squad will meet Simpson College Thursday (7:05 p.m.) in its only exhibition game. The Hawkeyes host Idaho State Friday, Nov. 9 (8:05 p.m., BTN) in their first regular season game.

The women play their first exhibition game Friday against Nebraska-Omaha. Tip-off is slated for 7:05 p.m. The Hawkeyes’ regular season opener is two weeks from today (Sunday, Nov. 11) when they entertain Dartmouth at 2:05 p.m.



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