

**October 11, 2007**



An Interview With:

## **COACH TODD LICKLITER**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I'm very pleased to be here and I appreciate each one of you being here, also.

I thought I'd share a few thoughts with you and some observations, and then obviously open it up for questions. A few thoughts. A very good friend of mine years ago told me, if you want to see further than others, then you'll need to stand on the shoulders of giants. I thought that was great advice.

And as I think through my career, my family, they are giants. I couldn't be more fortunate. And so I've got, I think, something to relate to as I look and I say, okay, what are we looking for in a place. And I think it comes down to many, many aspects, but the most important resource is people.

And my observations of the State of Iowa, the Hawkeye community, the University of Iowa is that we have outstanding people, and that will make it possible to have success. If we're going to be successful, it's going to be because we've got the right people around us. And from the day that I accepted the position throughout each day, I've steadily been impressed with the kind of support we have.

In our office alone, Pam Culver, Shelly Deutsch, they are terrific. They have helped me in every way imaginable. They are loyal. They love the Hawkeyes. What a great way to be introduced into your office, to have that kind of support, that kind of team work.

I'm constantly talking to our guys about team work. It's so nice to be able to point to the Hawkeye community, to this building, our staff, our administration, other coaches, and say, this is the way that you act when you're a great teammate. In our office alone, Justin Wieck who played us, he's

with us as an intern. What a tremendous resource he is. Jerry Strom, a tremendous resource and very loyal. The staff that I brought with me, LaVall Jordan, Joel Cornette, Chad Walthall; I'm enthused by what they offer, and I'm encouraged.

We of course know that we have a challenge ahead of us, but we are not looking very far ahead. We're trying to take care of today. I've told them, you cannot win a championship today but you can do what champions do today. We have tried to diligently put into place the culture that we want, and that is team first. We've done that through our offices now. We've taken down all individual shots except for Adam Haluska, he has one up. I think when you're the captain of the All-American Team, then you deserve to have your picture up and if you graduate.

After people graduate, I don't mind putting their individual picture up, but until that time, I think it should be team. We have our championship teams on the wall. I want our guys to recognize and see that. We want to pursue championships; I want them to see the Iowa history. We've done the same in the locker room. We've taken down individual shots and replaced it with Hawkeye. I think if we can develop what we call a team ego, which I respectfully have taken from Bill Russell, where Bill derived their sense of satisfaction through the accomplishments of the team; I think as I reflect back on a team that was coached last year, picked sixth in the league and remained in the top-10 for 16 straight weeks, a lot can be done when you pull it together as a team. What a beautiful aspect of sport. You know, you don't have to have individual gold medal winners to have a championship team. If they complement one another, if they will understand one another's strengths and if they set their goals and priorities properly, we're going to try to do that.

The next thing we've been trying to do in two hours a week, is try to establish an identity. I really want a team that shares the basketball. I

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really want a team that values the basketball and we've tried to encourage that with ball handling and with emphasis and I really want a team that defends together and with great purpose, and understand that if it hurts -- doesn't hurt that much that they quit but it hurts that the other team scores. We're trying our best to establish that. We are a team that makes it very difficult for our opponent to score, and we get the shot we want when we want it.

It's much easier said than done as it always is, and that's why I coach and don't play, and I can talk about it a lot easier than I can do it. But I've seen it done, I believe in this group. This group has been eager, they are proud to be here at the University of Iowa and I am very encouraged by them.

With that said, I think that's some insights that I have, and I have probably left people out. I just think of Steve Roe and Phil Haddy and our administration. I think of John Streif, there cannot be a greater Hawkeye. What a tremendous person, and it is to encouraging to work in this kind of environment -- and it makes you -- and that's not to mention all of the Hawkeyes I see, not only in the State of Iowa but in airports and throughout the country that just have a great desire for us to succeed.

It really adds to your motivation to know that people care so much, and they not only care by what they are saying, they care by their actions and that's what you'll see at the University of Iowa and in this department. And I have some comparisons. I've been at other places, I've been at good places, and this is a great place. So we're excited to get started. If that is good enough, Phil and Steve, I always look over, they give me direction, then I'll open it up and answer questions.

**Q. Your talent level is not barren, is it?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I don't think so, no. I think that you measure your talent a lot of different ways, and I like this group. As I said last year, we were not picked at Butler, and I am not predicting anything, but our level of talent and ability was questioned, but they didn't evaluate it in every way. I see some things in this group that could be special. We've just got to do it every day.

Do they need help? Yeah, that's part of our job, too. We want to go out and get them help. It won't be for this year but we're going to go out and work and see if we can get them some help.

**Q. The attitude being a strength, what other strengths do you see far as what people will notice on the floor?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: You know, I think that's a great question because every day you're trying to evaluate strengths. Some days you think you see something and the next day they will comeback and you don't know whether they -- which day they are tricking you because you'll see a guy do some special things and the next day he'll struggle a little bit.

I think part of that is the learning curve that's going on right now. And so, I think that what we've got to do is assess their strengths within what we want to do. And so it's kind of hard for me to say, I believe they are Big Ten players, I believe that they have the talent to play at this level.

But as I told them the other day, I don't want them to think that they are on scholarship at Iowa to play basketball. I want them on scholarship to play Hawkeye basketball. Well, what's that going to be? That's my job to implement that, and I've talked to them quite a few times and said, what we are trying to do is get to the point where they are unconsciously confident. There's a few steps in there and we are working through those steps right now.

So in that context, I don't know that I can say that this guy's strength is that. We have to see them together and we really haven't had the opportunity to do that.

**Q. Do you feel like you have 11 freshmen?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: When you say that, it's like your question, is there something wrong with freshmen. I think a better way to put it would be, is it new. Yes, it's new. Not the game of basketball but what they want. But their eagerness to do it is so encouraging. So I am encouraged by that.

**Q. Do you see the seniors being in a leadership role so far?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: You know, it's interesting, too. I think that we need to know where we're going and what needs to be said and what direction we need to go, and it's that culture.

So we need to know, okay, are we following in the right direction, are we leading the right direction. I've never been one to say, this certain individual is the leader. I think that we can

all lead.

I tell them often, you lead by serving. Do what's right, get out in front, pull everybody along. So our leaders today might be another leader tomorrow. We're all capable. I think it will be much easier on all of them when they fully understand how we want things done and where we're going.

But I think there's a greater sense of urgency with seniors. But I try to explain to the underclassmen, you're going to be seniors one day and you're going to want help. You're going to want help from the juniors, the sophomores, the freshmen. So if you're going to ask that when you're a senior, please give it now, let's not wait, I think that's only right.

**Q. Question on low turnovers at Butler?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: You know one thing I do, is there's been a practice at some schools at some places. I went to an NBA practice where individuals have the basketball, either managers or other coaches have a basketball ready. If the ball goes out-of-bounds, they throw that one back in and go get it. I think that's a bad lesson. I want our players, if they don't want to have to go chase a basketball, they keep it on the court. If they throw it up in the stands, then I think they ought to go get it.

I also think that just the idea that they should be in charge. When we have the basketball, we should determine what we want to do. And it takes a certain technique which we teach. It takes certain skill, and then it takes a mindset as to this is how we want to play the game. We want to determine that.

And I think I can speak a little bit from experience. I don't think they have to blindly follow. I think they can see last year's Butler team was the only one in the nation that averaged under double-digit turnovers. It had a lot more to do with them. I've told our team, our guys are fully capable of doing that. I don't think there's any question.

**Q. Now that you've been here a while -- have you had a chance to check it out a little bit?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I don't think they really want to. I think Iowa has a great way in itself. What I would like to do is see if some ideas that I have and some things complement what Iowa already has.

I would never want to come in -- I've said we're building, we're not rebuilding. We're just trying to do a little bit of renovation, put our touch on it. It's such a great place and it's already got so many positives in place that, you know -- and I won't say, and in no way am I being negative towards what our guys did at Butler and what Butler was; it's a special place, also.

But I'm hoping that we can play here a certain way and at the very highest level and that we can do it with the same kind of character, same kind of team spirit that I think would make Hawkeye fans proud.

**Q. If you had a game tonight, who would start at point guard?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I don't have a game tonight. You know what's nice is, I don't have to do that.

It's great, you know, if you did that, if you thought about, okay, if this happened today, then what would I do? I'll spend too much I'm on that, on that hypothetical can and not on what I really need to do.

I have no idea to be honest with you. I do know a few guys that wouldn't. (Laughter) You want me to go through those guys? You understand what I'm saying? And I recruit this way, too. I don't really like numbering people. I don't like to say you're only going to do this. We like versatile players. But we will have a group that we expect to rebound more than the other and we will have a group we expect to handle more than the others.

I've been fortunate in my career that I've had two guys on the floor at one time that could both be what can be considered points at handle, sometimes three and that would be ideal.

**Q. Any concerns?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I really haven't thought about concerns with them to be honest with you. That means I was thinking something was going to go wrong.

I think if we were going to label it concern, I just want to be far enough along in what we do that we can be successful when the challenge comes. You know, we've got a month from now. Do we have to be -- what level do we need to be at at that time; how far along can we get. And so much of that is their, not just willingness, but eagerness, to be a team and to believe.

And I've got to tell you, I asked them to come back in condition, I didn't tell them what they had to do. And when they got back here, they were in condition, every one of them. I've asked them to do other things and I watched a little bit of Lisa's press conference and she was looking around for some wood, I heard her say knock-on-wood, and now I'm looking around. They have not been late for anything they have done, morning, afternoon, whatever. There is a real feeling that they should be dependable and they should be considerate and that's a great starting point.

**Q. On the other hand, general surprises, would that be in that general area you've just been talking about?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: Again, you'd have to be worried about something going wrong. I really didn't ever think of that. I assumed they would do it, and now when they do, I want to make sure that they are appreciated for it because I know out there it's not always happening much I don't know if I would be pleasantly surprised but I'm appreciative.

**Q. You have not mentioned the name of any players yet. Is that intentional?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: Is it calculated or is it -- no, it's not calculated. I don't know. I wouldn't know where to start and how to end and how would we start on one guy and end on -- you know, I've thought about that from time to time as I've gone through it. And it seems like last year -- and I mentioned last year a few times and I apologize for that.

It's what I have to draw on, but other teams, not just last year, but other teams, people have voiced the guys who have cored and the guys who have rebounded and all that. And I'm going to tell you that the best teams I've had, eight through 14 were the best 8 through 14 guys in the nation. That was the key.

And I would hate to say -- and I'll give you an example. When we got beat in the Sweet 16 by Oklahoma. We had a young man that played about ten seconds in the three NCAA games. When we got beat, every person in that locker room to a man thanked that individual because he's the one that set a tone that was professional that made that possible. He was one of them anyway and it was very important.

I think that it's so hard to single people out in a team sport. We will, at times. You'll see

things. We need to do that, but right now, we're really focused on the whole.

**Q. About your coaching philosophy, who or whom did you draw a lot of your ideas from to take it to the program?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I think -- how do I single out somebody, that's pretty hard. I know I'm going to leave somebody out if I say, because I've been so fortunate. I've been around such great people and I guess just off the top of my head, the love for the game that my father had, I grew up with. He would bring home reel to reel for me when I was in fourth grade and I would watch it not knowing what I was watching but it was fun.

And then Barry Collier, who is just a terrific guy who really laid the foundation for me and helped me with the values part of it and what we felt was important. I watched him coach and I appreciated him; all of the coaches I played for.

And I would be very remiss if I didn't mention, and I think I've mentioned it every time, a man I worked for by the name of Bob Lee who was a brickmason. He taught me when you do a job, you put your signature on it: You're there, you're dependable, and you always stand by your work. I don't know if I've ever learned anything more valuable from any coach or any other individual than him.

**Q. You mentioned Bill Russell.**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: Yeah, I've read, and I've watched and I admire that he derives -- there was a story he spoke to the Boston Celtics and he told them, "My ego is bigger than all of yours." He said, "Difference is my ego is a team ego. If the team does well, then I feel good."

I think we all fight that but it's also the most beautiful part of it when it comes together in my opinion that that team can meet challenges together. I think that's a wonderful thing. And when you feel that self-satisfaction for sacrificing for the guy next to you, what a great feeling that is.

**Q. About being in a fishbowl -- how do you feel about the people, and fans, of Iowa, and connecting with them?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: You'd probably have to ask them I guess. For me, I've almost been -- I've been humbled by it to be quite honest with you. I greatly appreciate the desire

they have for the Hawkeyes to do well, and the way that they feel about it and the support that they have.

And I really believe this: That because I love the game, I've been fortunate; if we were to play, and no one were to know, we'd try to win and we'd put everything we had in it and we'd love it. But when you add into it, that this has such a loyal, passionate following, to me that adds great incentive and I'm excited about that.

So it's really nice to be quite honest with you. And I've told people, I don't know everything that's appropriate, but Lute Olson stopped me this spring and he just talked about his appreciation for the University of Iowa and the State of Iowa and the fans. And it's been quite a few years. So I was really impressed with that, and he's called me since.

So I know that it has a bearing on the people that are involved in a positive way.

**Q. Do you worry about tempering expectation in that regard; kind of a big picture thing?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: Well, how do you temper expectations when you have a scoreboard? That seems impossible to me.

What you need to do, though, I think is be able to know the challenges out there, but focus on what's at hand and so my expectations would probably be the same as everybody else's, but I would just be more apt I think to take them as they come.

**Q. How is Jeff Peterson in practice?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: Two hours a week, you know, he's done a great job. I've been really impressed with him. Terrific kid.

**Q. When you bring in a lot of these players -- do you really stress the value of the possession of the basketball, how does that transition and how are you able to accomplish that is this?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I think consistency, being persistent with it. You have to give people the overall idea of what we're about. It's the idea that we're here to play Hawkeye basketball and uphold that and what that is.

These guys, yeah, they are big scorers but if you ask any of them what you want to do, I've asked many groups, who is the leading scorer last year, six months; they can't tell you. But I guarantee you they can tell you who the National

Champion was and guys understand that. It's the self-sacrifices, the opportunity to compete for championships where guys, they will make sacrifices for that.

And we need guys to score, there's no problem with that. And I'm not a guy -- I'm opportunistic, if you can score it without passing it and lay it in, beautiful, do it. But just have enough poise and have enough strength to get the shot we want. Shoot the shot we want.

**Q. In your evaluation process, how heavily will you lean on players?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: I think they will completely pick the starting spots, not by vote or vocally, but by what they do. I'm just going to watch them. It's the same everywhere I go. If you're going to play minutes, you're going to earn them. And we'll just let it go. Every day in practice, we'll get to see and we'll get to evaluate, and they will pick all that.

Again, I think there's a lot to be said about what many people think is important, starting five, leading scorer. Those things are all nice but ultimately it's the group of individuals that play the best together and meet the challenge that, you know, will be recognized.

**Q. Who do you need big contribution from for Iowa to have a successful season?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: One through 11. And I mean that sincerely. We need a big contribution every day. We need guys coming here committed, guys who don't take days off, guys who -- I think when you're challenged and you're stretched, you get better. And so we really don't want to be overly -- we don't want to compete for position in practice. We want to compete and challenge one another in practice so that at the end of the day, we say, hey, we've done our part as a teammate to make one another better.

And we've talked a lot about team and all; cohesiveness. I think cohesiveness is a bad thing if you have underachievers. What I mean by that is you don't want guys that excuse one another because they like one another. I want cohesiveness with high achievers, high expectations, and that will hold themselves and one another accountable.

So I need big contributions from all of them, including the coaching staff. I'm telling you, it's incredible that you can point to other staff

members, other Hawkeyes and say, this is the way a team acts; look what they are doing; look at the service they provide; look at the unit; look at the passion; we need to mirror this. It's something I don't think we should ever take for granted here.

**Q. Since you put up the team pictures, will you have the uniform with the name on the back?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: Well, I'm really glad you brought that up because it gives me a chance to explain something. I'm a little concerned. I didn't order the uniforms. The uniforms were already ordered and I didn't realize it last spring. The numbers are high on the back of the uniform. Leaves a small space. But that might be good. Maybe we'll just have a small last name on the back there, you know.

I think you should be proud of both and we want the names on the back but we have run into a bit of a problem with the uniforms already made, the numbers bigger and higher, and now we've got a small space. We're working through that. Short of I'm not going to write them on there, but we're going to see if we can get them on there somehow.

**Q. Is there any kind of, as you say, renovation things, when you try to renovate and rebuild?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: We're not rebuilding. I just think we'll sell these guys out. All we're trying to do is put our touch on it and add to.

And I really believe that this team has bought in and said, yeah, if we can do some of these things; we already do some really good things, but if we add to your techniques, your vision for this, it will be a plus for us. And I appreciate that.

You know, you mention the mid-majors, and we always said, there are mid-major leagues, because that's what people -- but we never felt like we were a mid-major team. And I think that's the way that these great teams that you're mentioning are. You know, it's the caliber of player; it's the system, all of these things that come into it. So I respect every team that we'll play.

**Q. Do you embrace that everybody seems to be so good, is that something that you want, challenges like that?**

COACH TODD LICKLITER: One thing I will say is coming from that, I'll know what's going on in that other locker room. I know how they are feeling and I do believe, and I've spoken to this

often, with the right amount of humility, it doesn't matter who you're playing. You want to play the game correctly. You understand that they are good players and you need to give them your best. And if you do that, then, hey, there will be time up, there will be a score kept and you've just got to be better than them that day. And that's the challenge of it.

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