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An interview with:

COACH TODD LICKLITER

COACH LICKLITER: Thank you. It's always great to start a new season. As I've told you last year and I'll share again, this is such a special time for somebody that's been involved in the game of basketball for as long as I have. My father was a high school coach, and so the fall was a time of anticipation, enjoyment, just the thrill of a new beginning. It was always so exciting.

I also thought that maybe part of this time of the year that was special was because in high school you weren't allowed to do any kind of participation in the gym. But my father wasn't going to let time slip by. So we ran outside until October 15th. So I think I really was looking forward to October 15th where we could get inside. It was a brutal conditioning time.

But there is just great anticipation. It's so much fun to start a new year and the joy of it. So we're really looking forward to it.

I thought I'd share with you a few reasons why. The first one comes to mind is the joy of competition. It's such that if the predictors were always correct, as good as they are, we probably really wouldn't enjoy competition. Let's face it. It's that excitement to think that what is predicted may not come true or may.

And if you're the person that's chosen to win or the team that's chosen to win, you've got to make that happen. If not, you have this incentive to go out and change what the perception is.

I think that we'll be predicted by the experts at the bottom of the Big Ten this year. We look at that as just a great challenge, because we've got great confidence in our team and in ourselves. We see it as an opportunity.

You know, some of my favorite stories are ones where the ones that the non-favorites are the ones that came out on top. The movie Seabiscuit

comes to mind. What a talented, talented horse, but just he wasn't chosen to win like he did. And that made it special, to the point where we enjoy that story.

So we look at it as here's a wonderful opportunity in what I believe is the best conference in America. A schedule last year that was ranked to be 32nd best in the nation. I anticipate, again, our schedule is going to be tremendous. So it's going to be a time of great opportunity.

With that said, well, what gives me that optimism? We've got upperclassmen that I have enjoyed watching teach eager underclassmen. And to be quite honest, since I've been here we haven't had that advantage.

As I'm fond of telling players that come here you're really not on scholarship to play basketball here. You're on scholarship to play Hawkeye basketball. There is a difference. We've got very good basketball players here that need to come into this environment and then mesh their skills and their abilities together. And that takes some effort and some understanding.

Fortunately, now we've got this upper classmen, and when I say upper classmen, obviously, we've got five or four sophomores, one red shirt freshman, and a junior and senior. That doesn't seem like an abundance of seniority, but for our program and the way they approach it, I believe it is.

I get to see our players, our returning players, working with these eager, underclassmen, and watching that development. So now we've got more than just a coaching staff involved in this, and I'm excited about that and I should be excited.

Some of the things that you've got Matt Gatens, Andrew Brommer, Anthony Tucker, Aaron Fuller who have a lot of experience, and a good understanding. Then we've got terrific captains in Jarryd Cole and Devan Bawinkel. They are true leaders. I'm thankful for them.

Then John Lickliter who didn't play last

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year but has an understanding of the game, and may understand the coach better than most of the other guys, so he's got a little advantage there.

Then the new guys. We've got a walk-on, Nick Neri who has been terrific. Cully Payne is a natural point guard. Brennan Cougill is still big. Devon Archie, a long, very energetic, has a terrific upside, a junior college player, and then Eric May.

Out of that group I think we have five state champions if I'm not mistaken, which tells me they know how to lead a team or at least be apart of a special team and that is exciting for us.

So you can see that there is reason to be optimistic. For those returning guys we've had experiences that we're very thankful for. Last year we were able to participate in an international trip. That gives us ten extra practice days. Gave us three opportunities for great competition in Italy and Greece.

It gave us the experience and the time together. It gave us a chance to see a guy that we love and appreciate even go beyond the call of duty in John Streif. What a great example of how to be a teammate. What he did for us on that trip and the way he organized it, you could see a true leader as a servant. So we had that example.

Then over the summer and in the fall, we were all together. We were under the direction of an excellent strength coach in Rusty Burney. I'm so excited to add him to our staff. When you think of how much time they spend with your strength and conditioning coach, believe me, the gains are obvious. Strength is never a negative. You cannot be too strong.

Our guys have gained strength, they've gained conditioning. They've gained confidence in that. So they've invested and I think we'll reap the benefits of that investment. So another reason for optimism.

Then I think we've got the best fans in America. I thought the fans in Italy and Greece were good, too. And those are the only places I've been. So I'm going to say we've got the best fans worldwide, how about that. I love our fans. We've got a new leader of the Hawk's Nest in Tim McLaughlin. I think he's really putting fourth a great effort. We're going to have students here and supporting us.

If you remember the last few games last year in Carver Hawkeye I thought our team played with great spirit, great energy, and a lot of it had to do with the people in Carver Hawkeye supporting us.

I think it's a two-way street. We need to do our job. There's no question about that. But I also think maybe that extra energy, that extra boost that we feel helps us to do that. So I hope that the fans will trust us. Know we're working hard and we're putting together something special, and they'll come and support us because, like I said, we've got the best fans in America.

The last two things I'd like to say is how proud I am to be here and to be a part of this coaching staff. The special things that happen here -- when I say coaching staff I'm talking about the entire athletic department. I've got the best. I'm not going to be able to talk about every coach here, so I'm going to say we've got Lisa Bluder is a terrific coach, tremendous coach. Tom Brands, best coach in America in his sport. Kirk Ferentz, best coach in America in his sport.

And I think it was President Kennedy who said a rising tide lifts all boats. So I'm thankful for that rising tide, and what our other programs do because we want to do our part and be a part of that also.

It inspires us. So I appreciate the effort. I just mentioned a few. It's all of our sports.

The last thing I'd say is just recently you may be aware that the Sagarin rating and ESPN came out with a -- I think it's comprehensive. It's a study, it's a ranking of top programs throughout history.

72 years of basketball, if I'm not mistaken at the University of Iowa, and where we rank and compare to all the other programs. Some of them obviously haven't been playing that long. But to be tenth in that ranking is a testament to what we're about.

I talked about recapturing, and that's exactly what we want to recapture. We want to recapture that great tradition that's been established. Through the decades, the top 40 teams have been ranked, and we're always in the top 40 until this decade. We've fallen out. It's not acceptable, and we're going to work to recapture that.

We know we've got the support with the fans. I know I've got the right players here and coming, and we're excited about it. We have a strong staff, and we've got a great, great league to be able to participate in.

So with that said, you can see why I'm excited. Why I'm looking forward to another year in progress and I hope to see you often. And I

hope that we're going to celebrate a great year. A year that we're going to look back on and say we weren't predicted at the top, but we've proved a lot of people wrong.

So that's the opportunity ahead of us. And I'm looking forward to it. At this time I'll answer any questions you might have that I'm capable of answering.

Q. How is your point guard shaking out?

COACH LICKLITER: Well, it's awfully early. We get two hours a week to work with the players. But I do think that there's at least, at least four guys that can handle the ball well enough and have a good enough understanding that can give us some time at that place.

Then we'll just have to, as we work through it, see who gets the most minutes. That is the way. It will always work that way, whoever is performing the best is obviously going to earn the most minutes at that position, so. But I do think that we'll be in capable hands at all times.

Q. Who is the forward? Anthony?

COACH LICKLITER: Anthony and Cully and John and Matt Gatens might be able to play a little point. We're going to move him. If he plays point this year, he'll play four positions in two years. That's pretty good.

So I would say that's the kind of versatility we're looking for out of players. I think he's capable of doing it. I'm not going to limit it to that. We might have somebody else out there step up and play.

Every guy on our team works on handling the basketball because of the importance of it. So it just depends on how that goes.

Q. You mentioned Cully as a true point guard. From your perspective, what is a true point guard?

COACH LICKLITER: A true point guard is a guy who has terrific vision. And he has the ability to handle the ball and to make good decisions because of that vision and is comfortable there. Cully likes to have the ball in his hands.

He's very comfortable. That does mean he can't play off the ball. I've been a fortunate guy, been able to play two point guards a lot of times in my career. And it's great to have more than one handler out there. And I think we'll have three or four handlers out there. But whoever, there will be

a primary individual, and I think Cully's very comfortable with that.

Q. Your schedule has 13 of your first 18 at home, and two of the other five are in neutral sites. Can you talk about the advantage of only having three road games to start the first 20?

COACH LICKLITER: It's a great advantage for our fans. That is something we want to do. We want to make sure that Carver is open to our fans. That we've got games in Carver that people can come and see. So that is a real positive of being here and being at this level.

But I don't think it guarantees anything, as you know. What we're trying to do, it's not nearly as important as far as the way you play the game where you're at, as to the mindset, and how you go about it.

Now I do think our fans give us an advantage because of the energy they give us, the support, and the kind of emotion that they bring. So that's always a positive. Believe me. If they'd let me I'd stay at home every game. We'd love to play in Carver every game.

Q. Guys come here on scholarship not to play basketball, but to play Hawkeye basketball. What does that mean to you?

COACH LICKLITER: I wish I could sum that up in this amount of time. But it's truly a process. It's learning what and how to meet your responsibilities within the framework of the team, and that takes time.

I think I've told people when you first start an endeavor and start to work on something the growth process -- I don't know where I got it. I didn't, obviously, create this -- but there's four steps, basically. Unconsciously incompetent is your first step. Consciously incompetent is your second step. Consciously competent is the next step, and then unconsciously incompetent is the final step. And that's what we're striving for so that you become -- it's automatic.

Not just automatic that you're playing but that you're reacting correctly, and you're supporting your teammates. That is the importance of a system. It's truly a team game. It's nearly impossible to have a team sport and be successful without people understanding the ultimate goal and the process, and what it is that you're trying to achieve at the end.

Of course, what you're trying to do is win, no question. But there is a definite process to that, and fortunately as coaches you get to establish that. I feel very comfortable with the way that we approach it. I know it's a successful way. We just have got to be able to implement, and we've got to be able to execute, and I believe this team will. I have great confidence in this group.

Q. Is Anthony Tucker a more mature young man? How has he grown from his experience last year?

COACH LICKLITER: Well, wouldn't you think that we'd all want to be more mature almost every day? That we'll have an experience and we'll evaluate it? And if it's a good thing, we'll do more of that and stay away if it's bad? And I think Anthony's very bright, evaluated. He went through some tough times as we're all aware of, but it didn't define him.

As I told him, and a wise person once told me that in all situations that are tough, you can get bitter or you can get better. Anthony got better. I'm very proud of him.

Q. Can you ascertain whether he might be better suited for the point or the two?

COACH LICKLITER: I'm not at a position where I'd be willing to put him in one play. I think he's the kind of player that will be comfortable in whatever situation we ask him to be to fill that particular night. I trust him. I think he can play either position.

Q. What about the line of Secretariat this year? Well, I know two horses.

COACH LICKLITER: Me too.

Q. You have the horses to compete.

COACH LICKLITER: There's a lot of ways to judge that. I think that we've got the talent and we've got the philosophy. I think we've gained strength without question. So I guess my answer to you is that is exactly why we play the game, to find out. Right now I like my team. I like our chances. I think that, you know, it's a great opportunity for us.

I'm not going to ever predict. I'm not ever going to sell a team short. We're going to get better every day that we practice and we're going to try to win that next game. As long as we do that, I think we'll make the progress that needs to be made and we'll compete in this league, no question about it.

Q. Do you like having that underdog role? You're going to be voted last.

COACH LICKLITER: As I said, liking it or not liking it doesn't really matter. You need to not put too much emphasis on it. You need to focus on the things you can control.

With that said, there is enjoyment, I think in possibly proving the predictors wrong. I think everybody enjoys a challenge.

So it's kind of a challenge in front of you. Now is the Big Ten challenged enough? The Big Ten is a challenge itself. But, you know, does that mean it's over? Is that what that means? Are we done? The lights went down.

But I think there's plenty of challenges out there, and that's just one more. I think competitors thrive on challenges, they love them.

Q. When you look at the big picture, you're going to have to rely a lot on youth. What are the challenges you see there in having to have so many underclassmen in key roles?

COACH LICKLITER: The learning curve, obviously. How quickly can you see that we are together? And not together that we care about one another. We'll do that. But together in making the right plays, and making the right moves and supporting one another on the floor, and being able to counter what has been coming at us. How quickly can we do that?

One thing I will say and again, we're not promising anything except for you're going to get a great effort. You're going to get guys that are going to compete, and we're going to accept challenges. We're going to enjoy it. We're going to expect to win the next game. Every time out we're going to expect to win the next game.

But I will say this. If we look at the all-league team from last year, I believe all five were sophomores. So, you know, it's very possible to play at a high level as a sophomore in this league.

Q. With recruiting being such a fickle thing, how important did you feel with Cully Payne because this is his third school. He didn't go to Alabama in the fall before that. To get a player like him as a freshman and point guard is a very important spot?

COACH LICKLITER: You know what's

funny is I told Cully not too long ago, Do you know how fortunate you are, Cully, to get the right place after the third time? And what a great guy. But, you know things happen. I tell our coaches if you do what's right, you treat people fairly and you work hard, it's not luck. You get breaks. Things happen.

You know, we had a camp where Cully was going to attend back before his senior year and the flood came. And he didn't come.

I'd like to think if he had and would have met us and seen the campus, he was going to tour campus, he was going to be here, I think it would have been different.

So what we got is just a second chance. He got a second chance. I think we're both just thrilled that it happened that way.

Q. Can you talk about Jarryd Coleand how much different he is this year coming off or last year to right now and his expanding his game a little bit?

COACH LICKLITER: I think he's very comfortable with leadership. He's very supportive of what we want to do. I think it's a great indicator as to improvement that can be made when you're open to coaching, and you not only are open to it, but you're eager.

Then the next thing as you've mentioned, the ACL. You know, I told him at the beginning of last year you may not play quite as many minutes as you want to early, but I'd like to take this at a rate that I think is -- and the doctor's freed him.

But I said I'd like to just as far as your game experience and playing the game I'd like to take this at a rate where I feel you're going to be comfortable. Where we're not going to -- he told me after the season, coach, I think that was a really good idea. And I appreciated it.

He said, yeah, you're anxious, you want to play, but I feel like I got to come back at a good pace. And now it's just been steady all the way. I thought Joel Cornette did a great job with him in the spring. And then we had the ten practices. He played terrific when we went overseas and he just continues.

Again, if you ask him, I think he'd give credit to Rusty Burney, the strength coach. Jarryd is a guy that in my book might be strong enough, but he's not satisfied. He's got incredible strength. And he just keeps expanding his game and working on his skills.

The nice thing is that sets a terrific example for the underclassmen, so we expect him

to really have a great year. I don't know what that means as far as stats, but he's going to be a great teammate and be an asset regardless. He's somebody that everybody would want as a teammate.

Q. Do you have a strength program right now?

COACH LICKLITER: I don't know if it's different. I don't know if I'm prepared to analyze it. It's not my area. What I like to look at are our guys eager to get in there. Do they make the games? And how is it that the strength coach is relating to me and to them and all that. I think you just need to get on the same page with it.

I think that for whatever reason when Rusty came in, he had a terrific approach. He's got the right program and he's eager to help. One of the things that I really enjoyed was when he first game he said, hey, coach, I'm from Pella, Iowa. I'm a Hawkeye, and I'm not just happy to be here. I want to help us be successful. And I could tell right then that he had the right approach. And it truly has been a good fit.

I just think that, like I say, you see the games. You just can't be too strong. It's just not possible.

Q. Can you talk about Devan Bawinkel's progress and leadership a little bit?

COACH LICKLITER: Yeah, he's a guy. A quiet leader that everybody respects and they should respect him. Because regardless of his role, he's going to always put the team first. He's going to do things and play right to his strengths.

So I doubt you'll see him inside the three-point arc at all. I mean, what did he shoot, one-two last year, and got fouled by a teammate on that one, if I remember right. So he'll know his strengths. He'll play to his strengths. He understands the system. He's very bright, very likeable. But he's a guy that really wants us to recapture what Hawkeye basketball should be about and is about. It's not just that he gets along. It's that he's driven. But he's likeable but he's driven, and I think that's really huge.

Q. How much of a setback was it losing the four players to it transfers?

COACH LICKLITER: Oh, that was a long time ago. We don't even address it anymore. We move on and I wish them all the best. I just

absolutely love this team. So I'm thankful for this team.

Q. Do you think that helped unify the guys that didn't transfer out?

COACH LICKLITER: I guess you'd have to probably ask them. I don't ever think there was any -- with the group that we have, they were always unified, so.

Q. May and Cougill, these are two guys fans are going to know a lot more because of what they did in high school. What is it they bring to the table, and how ready are they to compete right away?

COACH LICKLITER: We've just been with them the two hours a week. So it's hard to judge. But I can tell you what their strengths are, but I can't say how we're going to fit together and what their roles are going to be and all that.

I've said this before. If Brennan and Eric were in another state playing basketball, I would have recruited them. But it is nice to know that they grew up watching the Hawkeyes, and they're going to represent their state. And I think there might be some added incentive to that, and that's a good thing. They're plenty good regardless.

They've both won state championships, and they're both a lot of fun to be around. And I think they're absolutely the kind of student-athletes that I want to recruit and coach, and watch them have terrific careers. I've got a really strong feeling that they're going to be successful throughout their career here and beyond. They're exactly the kind of guys I want to have on on this team.

Q. How important is it to have players for the long-term of basketball?

COACH LICKLITER: I like it. There's no question about it. I think the state has terrific high school coaching. I think that there's been great players come through this state. We've got some of them on our team, and we'll continue to recruit them. We're on obviously going to supplement. We'll have players from other states also. But we like the in-state guys we've got without question.

Q. Do you think you have the size up front? Is that going to be an issue at all?

COACH LICKLITER: I guess we'll find that out. I do think that strength helps in that. Knowledge of where your help is, your awareness on the court, your technique. All those things play a part in it. I've often thought we put too much

emphasis on height. Wingspan is a lot more important than height.

The other part about it is that the opponent has to guard our guys also on the other end. You know, Matt Gaten's played a little four last year even. Even as a freshman, he battled defensively and he was a tough match-up on the other end for them.

Q. This is year three of your program. Do you feel like you have the foundation in place to be successful not only this year but in the future?

COACH LICKLITER: You know, absolutely. Absolutely: I never think any other way. And it's not a situation where it's not wishful, I believe. I think we've turned the corner. I'm excited. I like where we're going. And so much of that is just the group that we've got right now and the support that we receive and the staff that we have.

None of us are happy with where we finished, and that's huge. Who would want to be? We're never going to be happy until we're competing for championships.

Q. Could you talk about the progression that Aaron Fuller made talking to players in the summertime?

COACH LICKLITER: Good, I'm glad to hear players are supporting him. His strength, as I mentioned last year I thought was a real key, and it's very obvious that he put the work in. Though we're not there. You don't have to be there when he shows up in the fall and he's that much stronger.

The other thing about Aaron that is key is guys who are eager to learn, respect what you're doing and make strides. That's the way he is, and he has a great understanding of what we want to do, the way we want to play, and now he's developing the kind of body that the Big Ten requires.

So it's only natural he made the strides. I'm glad to hear his teammates are supporting him. I know they respect the work he's put in.

Q. Do you go to any football games?

COACH LICKLITER: Do I go to any football games? I wouldn't miss them: How about norm Parker? That defense is incredible. I love it that doesn't take anything away from the rest of the

staff. We've got the best football coach in America.

I've got to say this, the Arizona game. I don't know who caught him, but the Arizona player looks like he's going to score a touchdown. The effort to catch him from the back and tackle him on the three--yard line, and then to stand? That's why you win. It's that kind of effort. You know, that's passed right down. The consistency in that program is incredible and to be admired and respected.

I said this not too long ago we have a sign up in our locker room that says consistency, the mark of a champion. I don't know where I got it. I didn't make it but I thought it was very accurate. Consistency, the mark of a champion. We can take the sign down, just put a picture of Kirk up, and probably do the same thing. So it's a thrill to go to the football games. We love it.

As I said before, it's not the only sport here. We like all the sports. Tom Brands has become a great friend, and somebody I have tremendous respect for.

Q. What is the best piece of advice you've gotten from another coach on campus that you've been able to actually apply and see results from?

COACH LICKLITER: Oh, gosh. I'm sorry something doesn't come to me right off the bat. I will say this, I have great appreciation for Kirk mentioning to me about the process he went through and to indicate he feels like we're doing it in a similar fashion. And that is very encouraging. It's appreciated.

So if that's the case and we're building it the right way, and he said that, so I greatly appreciate him sharing that with me because it's very uplifting. It means somebody whom I respect feels like we're on the right track.

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