

November 10, 2011



An interview with:

COACH BLUDER

COACH BLUDER: Well, I guess it's officially here. Signing day was yesterday. We signed our four players that had committed to us. Got their letters of intent back yesterday. We're excited to welcome Claire, Kali, Kayla and Nicole as future Hawkeyes and think we signed a really good class for us as far as bringing in some height and also bringing in some kids that really fit our system.

We have some tall guards like Kali and Claire that are six foot and above that can shoot the three but also are great penetrators and will fit in very well with our system.

Opening up on Saturday against Harvard, they're a good team that's picked to finish second in the Ivy. They finished second in the Ivy last year. They return three of their top four scorers from last year, including all their guard court.

Their point guard is a key to them, Brogan Berry. She's an Ohio kid. She is a very good shooter as well as just a tremendous floor general. But she's a scoring floor general. So it's going to be a great matchup for us, 7:00 Saturday night.

Then a quick turnaround to play either UNLV or Butler on Sunday. Not ideal having such a short turnaround time, but with the football game at 11 a.m., we decided it was best to go at 7:00 for our game because it would allow to free up the parking lots so our fans can get back and have a more traditional setting for women's basketball.

Q. What are you hoping to get out of the team with that opening game?

COACH BLUDER: Well, we go into every game expecting to win, but we need to get better I think offensively in particular. Our defense is doing

a pretty nice job. Once in a while we have a defensive breakdown, but that happens even at the end of the year.

Our rebounding wasn't very good last week. We've worked hard on it. I thought today we did an exceptional job in our scrimmage. We actually scrimmaged our gray squad today. Did a great job on the boards against the guys. That was good.

But our offense still isn't quite there. I think that's always the slower thing to come around because it's timing, it's reading defenses, it's a lot harder to play offense and to learn a new offensive system. Sometimes defense is just hard work and guts, and we have that on this team.

Q. Was there anything you were waiting for to see in Claire before you finally offered her a scholarship?

COACH BLUDER: Yes. This summer Claire really came on and she proved herself especially against some of the best players in America.

For example, at the Nike camp in Georgia, I thought she played very, very well. Those are the best players in the nation. So I thought she stepped up this summer. I thought her game improved. I thought she showed her versatility, she showed her ability to be strong, taking the ball to the hole, accepting the contact, making the three, like Jaime can do. She's also strong enough that she can defend a power forward down there and she's athletic enough to guard a three on the perimeter.

She proved herself to us this summer.

Q. Is it tough with a recruit like her, because she was just waiting for the Iowa offer, to know when to make that offer?

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, I love it when kids grow up in the state and they dream about being Iowa Hawkeyes. To me that's exactly where

we want our program to be. Claire is no exception. I've known Claire since maybe she was two years old. Claire is obviously Shelley's daughter. Shelley was an assistant coach at Bradley when we were at Drake. I can remember seeing her on that court when she was two years old.

Sometimes you're cautious, too, when you are friends with the players. I think we're a little harder on those kids because we don't want that friendship to blind us. I told Claire, You've earned this, you didn't get it because you were our friend, you didn't get it because somebody else turned it down, you got it because you earned it.

I want everybody to understand that she really is a good player and she's going to be a good addition to our team.

Q. It would have been hard to see her go to Drake or Wisconsin and have a good career.

COACH BLUDER: There's no doubt. You don't like to lose local kids that you want in your program to outside schools.

Q. What's most problematic about the short turnaround this weekend?

COACH BLUDER: Just our ability to prepare our team. We give a thorough scouting report and time to walk through things in practice and show them on film, show them on paper, I think it's easier especially early to learn.

Later in the year, okay, you're going to see a double screen, a staggered screen, they're going to know how to do it, they've done it a million times. Freshmen are still learning the terminology, how to handle this screen. So I think that makes it a little bit more difficult, is just being able to prepare them how to defend the team.

Offensively it's not so much I don't think as hard, but I think defensively it's hard to prepare your team when you have a shorter turnaround.

Q. What about their legs this early in the season?

COACH BLUDER: You always worry about that. You think the other team has the same disadvantage. So I don't want to get too caught up in that because it's equal for both, all the teams.

Q. Will you go to more players? You have a deeper bench this year anyway.

COACH BLUDER: Again, sometimes you have a plan going into a game, sometimes it changes when you're in the game because of the

situation. But we would like to get a lot of people in this game.

I think our bench is deeper and stronger than it has been in the past. I think we as coaches need to use that in order to free up some minutes for our top five, six, seven players so they're strong again on Sunday.

Q. (Question regarding having taller guards.)

COACH BLUDER: I think that's going to be good for us. I think we'll be a better defensive team because of the arm length we have on these players. You can cover more ground when you're bigger. Sometimes you can make a pass around someone easier when you're taller.

I think it will be good for us to have some taller guards. By no means am I against small guards, it just worked out that we were able to get some really quality guards that happened to be over six foot.

Q. Smith and Timmerman, are they going to need some work or come in right away and provide depth?

COACH BLUDER: I think they're going to need a little work. I think most freshmen do.

But luckily we have Morgan as a senior next year, and Bethany will only be a sophomore. It's not like it's a situation where there's this hole they have to come in and fill this hole immediately. Again, I hope that's where our program is, where we don't have those holes, but yet we're bringing people in, letting them learn the system, and bringing them around at a little slower rate.

Q. What is the selection process with these three teams coming in this weekend?

COACH BLUDER: There's not any set of rules on how we select the group of teams coming in. This is one of the oldest women's basketball tournaments in women's basketball history. So we're proud of this tournament. I think we have a good reputation out there for how we treat our competition, how they're going to be treated, the fan support we have.

At the same time we don't have to get a team from the West Coast and the East Coast. That's just kind of happened this time.

We do try to get, if it's possible, teams that are good caliber that can come in from farther distance. We're more likely to do that because

they get two games in this weekend, not just coming in for one game.

Q. Football weekends are good recruiting weekends for you. How do you balance that with playing the tournament and all that?

COACH BLUDER: I don't think we're going to sleep this weekend. It's going to be a very busy weekend. We have two games, our opening two games, plus we have some tremendous recruits on campus that are very important to us.

It's going to be a very busy weekend for us. We're going to juggle it all.

Q. Do you still go to the game?

COACH BLUDER: The football game, we'll be going for the first half with our recruits and let them stay for the second half.

Q. Harvard won 18 games last year. Pretty stiff opener for you. Was that planned that way?

COACH BLUDER: I'm probably not one of the smartest coaches in America because usually when you have a tournament, you play the lowest RPI team. We have never done that because I want to play against the best RPI teams. I think that helps us with our seed at the end of the year, it helps us get a better RPI.

We did not select Harvard because they are the worst team on paper predicted out throughout this year in the field. We did not do that.

Again, I know it sounds silly and people may not understand it, but we want to play against a good team and we have confidence in our team on the home court, too.

Q. Are you being really careful with Morgan's minutes with her knees the way they are?

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, we are trying to watch those minutes. She's got some pretty bad tendinitis in her knees. We know it's a pretty long season. Bethany will get some significant minutes at the five. Quite honestly, Kalli could also get significant minutes at the five. We can run a five-out offense. I have no problem with that.

Q. How is Kalli with that?

COACH BLUDER: Kalli has been great. She has been absolutely tremendous this year. Whatever this team needs, I'm going to step up

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and do it. You want all your players to have that belief and be that way, but she's living it.

She can play the two, the three, the four or the five for us. That is hard to do. She's learning all the different plays at the different positions. She's learning them, too. She's got a great memory to be able to do that.

Q. You mentioned Theairra was tentative when she first got on the court in practice. Has she started to loosen up a little bit?

COACH BLUDER: Not as much as I like. I think she needs to have more repetitions, more time, more minutes. I haven't seen a big shift yet in her. We all see she's a talented player. Everybody can recognize that in the entire arena. I need to see it in her eyes, and it's not quite there yet.

Q. Is there anything you can do to aid that?

COACH BLUDER: Well, I think time and building confidence going through repetitions, knowing you're going to be okay.

But there are also some things she can do to help herself get mentally over this hurdle, and she's trying to do that.

Q. Were you concerned at all by Jaime only scoring six points in the exhibition game?

COACH BLUDER: You never like to see one of your shooters struggle. But I have such confidence in Jaime, it will never die. My confidence is so strong in Jaime and I know how hard she works. I know all the extra shots that she puts up in the gym. So it's just a matter of time and it will happen for her.

Thank you.

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