

**January 25, 2012**



An Interview With:

## **COACH LISA BLUDER**

COACH BLUDER: We're in the middle of kind of a tough week with three top 25 teams, and two of them being on the road, our next opponent being at Nebraska, ranked No. 19 in the country right now. They're 10-1 on their home court so they've played well at home. And that one loss was to Penn State by 20 points. So obviously if you can look at a good loss, maybe that was -- they split with them during the year, but they obviously are playing very well on their home court.

They're coming off a convincing win versus Minnesota. Last time we played them, close game, up two at half, lost by five. One of those situations where, in my opinion, it could have been anybody's game. I thought we played well. We took care of the ball. We only had 13 turnovers that game, we shot the ball well from the two-point line and from the free-throw line, but we need to play better defense. We gave up 46 points in the second half versus Nebraska, and obviously that's way too many points.

They have some tremendous players. Jordan Hooper is as good as any player in the Big Ten conference. She's hard to guard because she's such a good, solid 6'2" build, averaging almost a double-double at 20 points a game, nine rebounds a game. Again, I think she's as good as anybody in the Big Ten conference and difficult to guard, just a great shooter.

I love their point guard Lindsey Moore, averaging 16 points a game. She had 22 against us, including 11 assists. She averages six assists but she had 11 assists against us last time.

And Emily Cady in my opinion is a rising star in the Big Ten. She's a freshman. Definitely a candidate for Freshman of the Year and All Big Ten Freshman team. Her numbers have

improved, almost doubled, since the conference season has started. She is really coming into her own. Again, a little bit difficult match up because she runs the floor so well.

They have an undersized post that can be difficult to defend, and they're a good defending team, too. Connie has always played really aggressive defense, and they're one of the few teams in our conference that picks up in a full court press the whole game. We really don't have anybody else that does that, so it's a different style defensively than what we see. And that can wear on you, as well.

So I was really, again, very happy with our team only having 13 turnovers against them the last time we played, and we're going to have to duplicate that type of performance in order for us to be in this game at Nebraska.

**Q. Can you talk about playing two games in three days and how important this stretch is, if you guys want to kind of get things going the other direction?**

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, obviously we need to get it going. We need some wins. It's not an easy week to have that happen, but we need to make it happen. We need to have a quality win or two in our résumé, and this is an opportunity for us to get it. Would we rather play Purdue on Sunday? Absolutely. There's no doubt we'd rather play them. Purdue has the same disadvantage in that they only have one day to prepare for us, but we are playing a top-20 opponent, and they're not.

Coming into this game against Purdue, Purdue, again, top 25 team, playing very good basketball, had a convincing win against Michigan State on Monday night. But again, we played them well there. You know, again, I feel like it could have been anybody's game at that one, as well.

We need to start winning some of these anybody-can-win type of games. They need to start sliding our way. You make your own breaks,

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and we've got to start making some of our own breaks.

**Q. You guys in the past have had to in the four-year stretch of making the tournament, have had some years where you've had to go on runs to make the tournament. Do you see that out of this group still?**

COACH BLUDER: I think we can definitely do that. You know, again, we're so close to winning so many of these games that it gives you -- I am optimistic that it can happen, but we have to play a 40-minute game. But we've been there. We've been right there with the top teams in our Big Ten. So I don't think anybody looks at us and thinks, oh -- I think they look at us and think we're pretty dangerous.

**Q. What does Friday entail for you, a sandwich day between the two games?**

COACH BLUDER: Yeah, and hopefully we won't have any travel issues getting back from Lincoln. We did that on Sunday and got back much later than we expected on Sunday, but luckily we had a day off on Monday. Hopefully that won't happen to us on Thursday night because we need to get back as early as we can.

Friday will be mostly a film and just -- you have to have a recovery day after you play, and so more shooting and just talking about Purdue. We're not going to be able to work on fundamentals as much that day or skill development that day just because you've got to rest somewhat on that day and also still put in your mind to get ready for Purdue. It would be much easier to do after a win.

**Q. What does being able to see Hooper in person and play against her do that you're going to maybe change the way you defend her this time around?**

COACH BLUDER: I thought we defended her really well. We held her below her average. She had nine points for most of that game. She hit a couple threes late that were very contested. And we held her eight below her rebounding average at that point. She was averaging 12 rebounds; we held her to four rebounds in that game. So I thought we defended her pretty well in that game.

**Q. Was that mostly Kelly?**

COACH BLUDER: That was mostly Kelly. And Lindsey Moore is the one that really got away from us in my opinion in that game because I think

Jordan Hooper is so good that she's going to get those points. You're not going to hold Jordan Hooper to single-digit numbers, but Lindsey Moore in my opinion got away from us.

**Q. Has Nebraska been the surprise of the Big Ten so far?**

COACH BLUDER: I think Nebraska, just because they were the unknown, they didn't fare well last year, they were very young last year, but two years ago remember they had a No. 1 seed in the national tournament. So obviously they have the coaching, they have the players, they have the system in place, so they're a good program.

I think for us it was just that nobody really knew a lot about them because they were the newcomers in the league and that they didn't have a -- they weren't coming off a super season. I think Purdue is also the surprise in the Big Ten. We know Purdue is always going to be good, but when they lost Drey Mingo with an ACL and for them to continue to be this good, that's impressive.

**Q. Do you have any injury updates?**

COACH BLUDER: Kalli Hansen will not suit up again. She's still recovering. But she should be coming around soon. She had an injection into her leg to help this groin pull because it was not healing, and she's out one to two weeks with that, but it's been a week today. So she could be back today, but she just is not responding well. So that's unfortunate.

Melissa will not be dressed again. I think we've really missed Melissa. In my opinion she's that defensive person on the perimeter for us, bringing in another three-point shot opportunity for us. But hopefully, my optimistic goal is to have her by next Thursday at Wisconsin. And that could be an optimistic goal, but that's -- so far so good with her rehab.

And the rest are pretty much status quo.

**Q. Have you ever been to the Devaney Center?**

COACH BLUDER: Yes, I played there twice, once when I was at Drake and once with Iowa in the WNIT. We went over there and we won.

**Q. How is Sam adjusting to life in the Big Ten?**

COACH BLUDER: I think it's been harder

than maybe she imagined it was going to be. I think Sam is going to be a great player for us. We've had to kind of throw her in the fire a little bit, and that may not have been the best way to bring her along, but we didn't have a whole lot of choices.

Sam has some unbelievable passes, but then she has some that are kind of crazy, and we just need to limit those crazy ones and bring out those great ones because they are pretty awesome passes when she is on the money. I think she still needs to be more comfortable with the ball. You know, we've given her some tough defensive assignments, too, and that's probably hurt her confidence a little bit. But Sam is a great competitor, and I have so much faith in that kid, I really do. And so I think she's going to be a good one for us.

**Q. Do you feel, especially with the tournament coming, the seniors are starting to feel like this is the final season, starting to hit them a little bit?**

COACH BLUDER: We have five seniors but only two of them are playing right now, so it's kind of an unusual situation when you have the majority of your seniors sitting on the bench out with injuries. But certainly for Kamille and for Kelly that are two starters for us, they know the situation. They want to end up in the NCAA tournament again, and they know what has to happen in order for that to happen. I'm sure they feel a little bit of pressure right now, and you can't worry about those things because you start thinking about it too much and it starts hampering your play.

But those are two seniors that I am very thankful for. They have had huge roles in our past success, and there's nothing more that I want than my seniors to go out with a good season.

I was talking about it with Kamille, and Kamille nudged me a little bit this week and said, "Hey, you've got to stop worrying about my senior year." You do; you want them to go out with their best opportunity, their best play. I just really, really like those two kids a lot.

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