

Nov. 27, 2017
Head Coach Lisa Bluder
Press Conference Transcript

Opening Statement

Since it is Blackout we will be wearing our black uniforms and Florida State will be wearing their whites. That kind of throws everybody off a little bit but we're trying to get into the theme of the season.

I want to congratulate Megan. Third week in a row she has been honored, this time again on the Big Ten Honor Roll. She continues to put up amazing numbers and play so very well. She has been nothing short of amazing all year for us.

It is the Big Ten/ACC Challenge for us. Probably our toughest opponent of the year so far, obviously they are undefeated. Coming in here with a No. 13 ranking. Very good, experienced team. This team starts four seniors and one grad transfer. Since we only start one senior they have the advantage as far as experience-wise.

We're glad to be playing at home and hopefully we'll have a good crowd here with the Buck Night. It should be a fun environment for us.

They have some familiar faces in that Chatrice White was a transfer from Illinois. She is in her senior year now and is the starting post for Florida State. We recruited her hard out of high school and obviously she chose Illinois and spent her first two years of competition there. Then there is an Illinois player from Joliet that comes off the bench but is a tremendous player for them -- Nicki Ekhomu -- does a great job and is someone we looked at when she was in high school and ended up at Florida State and is having a really good career there.

You look at their numbers, they have five players in double figures. They shoot the 3 really well, they rebound extremely well - they are getting over 50 percent of offensive rebounding opportunities, which is an incredible number. They transition offense very well, so those are things we have to focus on but I also like the way our team is playing right now.

Do they remind you a little bit of yourselves? Some of the things you just mentioned are things you can also say about you: five in double figures, looks like they only have nine in their rotation.

When you brought up ourselves, I think maybe you are right. Both teams are crashing well, both teams transition well. Both teams mix up their defenses between player and zone. Nice inside-outside game. Their experience is outstanding, this is a team that has been in the NCAA Tournament and went deep again last year. They are very well-coached -- Sue does a great job, I have known her for 20 -plus years -- and she does a wonderful job with their team.

Their rebounding margin jumps off the page. How do you prepare for that?

It has to be a focal point in practice and everything we talk about with them when we are going through our scout. Keep reminding them how important it is going to be to box out and whether we are in player or zone we have to find somebody to box out. Their guards are good rebounding guards, too. It's not just their post players around the hoop. Everybody on their team gets involved.

Watching Alexis play in practice last year, did you expect her to be this confident?

We kept seeing her grow and grow last year. When Tania went down we questioned if we should bring her out of the redshirt. I'm glad we didn't. At the same time she improved a lot, got more comfortable out there so she is not your traditional freshman on the floor. We felt last year she was going to get lost because we had four more guards essentially last year than we do now. We thought she was too good of a talent to get lost in that shuffle last year.

What part of Megan's game impresses you most?

Consistency. Every night, every practice, doesn't matter, road game, home game. She plays the same way all the time. She plays hard all the time -- I know that should be like how else should players play? That is not human nature. It's not human nature to go 100 percent effort every single second you're on the floor and she does it. That is what has made her so great -- unbelievable work ethic, desire to get the job done. She is consistent whether it is shooting, rebounding, running the floor hard, the manner in which she practices. It is just consistency.

You got Kathleen back in the mix last week. Is she back to where she was?

She is close to being back to where she was before her injury. It was nice because we were able to hold her out of those two games at home and then ease her back in those first two games in Florida. By the last game we put her back in the starting lineup. We need Kathleen; A, we need the depth, B, she is a bigger guard who works hard on defense. It gives us a number of different point guards we can go with and I'm glad she is back.

Kathleen led the team in steals last year? Did you expect that when you recruited her?

She is aggressive. You never can predict anything, but we love that part of her game. That is something we need for this Florida State game; we need her defensive moxie on the floor.

How much does the competition kick up a notch...

Even though we have only played nine players I feel like my staff has done a good job managing those substitutions and spreading those minutes among the nine players. I'm happy with the way we are handling that. The competition does kick up a notch when you look at their ranking -- they are undefeated and they are a very good team. Not taking anything away from the great teams like Elon and Western Kentucky that we have played, but Florida State is in a different category.

It seems like you guys are always playing a team in the top-15 in the country when it comes to the Big Ten/ACC Challenge...

We've gotten some interesting matchups in this Big Ten/ACC Challenge. We had Notre Dame last year, we had to go to Louisville a few years ago. I haven't seen anybody from the bottom part of the ACC lately. I'm not sure who does the matchups, but I'd like to have a talk with them about that (laughs). Again, we are playing one of the best ACC teams.

You've already beaten three teams that made the NCAA Tournament last year. How does that help your confidence heading into something like this?

Our team is feeling really good about the way they are playing. They aren't putting a whole lot of pressure on themselves. They are having fun and they have great chemistry. Even when things get a little tighter, they've been able to handle it. They are enjoying the experience. I don't think we want to talk a whole lot about pressure and those types of things. I think they are just enjoying each and every game.

We know what Carly (Mohns) has been through the past few years. How nice is it to see her out there? Is she pretty much back to where she was before?

Carly plays with some pain at times. She gets some very bad pain at times. Does it keep her out? Absolutely not, but we do have to manage the amount of minutes she plays in practice and in games. You're right though. I'm so glad to see her out there on the floor. There's nobody that deserves it more. She's had five or six different surgeries on her same knee. One in high school and the rest of them being here. No kid should have to go through that. I admire her for sticking through it even when she could have given it up and kept her scholarship. She wants to be a part of this team and be on the floor. I have great admiration for Carly.

You said Florida State would be the best team you face. Does that include the Big Ten teams?

I meant up to this date. Florida State is our best opponent thus far.

Do you guys talk about the fact that you are undefeated so far?

Just in an enjoyment area. Just really being able to enjoy that we are 7-0. It hasn't put a lot of pressure on us, we are just kind of having fun with it.

Are you surprised that Alexis (Sevillian) has been able to have this big of an impact early on?

I think everybody would be surprised that she's our second leading scorer on our team right now. Everybody is a little bit surprised by that. She is just fearless shooting the ball. She really has that shooters mentality. She doesn't worry about putting it up, and she doesn't care if she misses one. She just keeps firing away. She definitely has a scorers mentality.

It's pretty crazy when you look at the steals statistic that Hannah (Stewart) is actually leading the team. Is that just the way the ball is falling?

I think Hannah has done a really good job defending the post. It's fun. It's fun to see your posts out there getting deflections and steals. She's pretty agile. She's strong, but she can use her mobility as well.

I know it's still really early, but what does Megan have to do to be an All-American?

In my opinion, Megan is putting up All-American type numbers. Playing in the Big Ten and playing the strength of schedule that we do, I don't know how you couldn't have her in the conversation. What does she need to improve on? I don't know. I think she has to continue to do what she is doing. Always working on improving your post defense would be something, but people usually look at statistics when they vote for those types of things, and I think in her statistics she is definitely garnering that kind of attention.

Her right hand seems to be getting better each game...

This summer Megan worked so hard on her right hand. If she did 50 hook shots with her left hand, she did 100 with her right. She doubled everything on her right-hand side because she knew that was a little bit of a weakness. I don't know that I would say that's a weakness anymore.

How would you characterize Shakayla Thomas?

She is a nightmare to match up with. She is so strong. We need to keep the ball out of her hands if we can. She does a lot of damage when she gets the ball in her hands. We just don't have a great person to match up with her, because she is a huge guard that is strong that can post up like any post player we've played against. She will play some four, but she will start at the small forward for them. She's a strong rebounder and an incredible driver that can really use her body and strength well to score.