

University of Iowa Media Conference

Friday, August 17, 2018

Bond Shymansky Volleyball Media Day

BOND SHYMANSKY: Thanks, everybody, for being here. We start the beginning of every season with the same mission of developing true mental toughness within our group, and with the same excitement. There's two things that I know at the start of every season: One is that we're going to be better than the year before, and two is that we have a lot of different parts.

It's been an enjoyable preseason for us, and now we're T-minus getting our team ready to go out there and compete and capture some things that have eluded us for quite some time. I know that our upperclassmen are very motivated by that as well as our new players, and they're gelling very well right now as our new 2018 Hawkeye volleyball squad.

Q. How do you look at the Big Ten Conference? Another case of a lot of depth.

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, Big Ten always has a lot of depth, and I think we would always say the same thing. It's the strongest conference in the country, but this year more than ever it's very different. You have teams that were toward the top last year that graduated a lot of starters, and probably case in point would be Michigan State graduated their entire starting lineup. That's pretty rare when that happens. But I think there's going to be some real shuffling, and it's a great opportunity for us. When I first got here, we really had to pull ourselves up by our boot straps; we were constantly at the bottom of the league, and now we kind of find ourselves in that eight, nine spot a lot, and now we need them to make another step forward.

We know that if you're top eight in the league, you're going to be in the NCAA tournament, you're likely going to be in the top-25. I think we have seven teams right now that are top-25 preseason. Just a huge opportunity, and that's the best part of being in the Big Ten.

Q. How have the back-to-back winning seasons kind of put some juice into the program?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Back-to-back winning seasons seep into the way that the players think of themselves, how they carry themselves, how they train, the discipline that they have, but also just the belief. They



go out there and expect to win when they play. It takes a while to convince them that that's what they're capable of, and my belief is not nearly as important as theirs, and when they believe in themselves and each other, then they tend to get things done.

Q. I remember last year at Media Day you said how now is the time when you're expecting to see results. Did you see those results and how do you build upon that this year?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, we saw great results last year, but we missed on a couple big opportunities. That's going to be part of the learning curve. I think you see it in returners like Kelly, Coyle and Louis.

We especially are seeing it right now in Taylor Louis in terms of the way she's come back with a vengeance. Even yesterday in practice I was challenging her to step up more, and I said, man, you can be really wicked when you want to be; it's time to want to be that way every single day, and instead of kind of licking her wounds a little bit and kind of doubting what I was saying, she knew that to be true, and she went out, and for the next five minutes in practice, it was just plain nasty. She's got that in her. The team follows her when she goes there, and so that's kind of a vacated spot for us inside of our team chemistry that Jess Janota graduated and she took some of that. We used to call it Jess would go into beast mode. So now Taylor Louis needs to find a way to take over where Jess left off.

Q. You lost a lot of production in the front row from Jess Janota. How are you planning to build other players up to that level?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, players like Meghan Buzzerio, who's gotten good playing time for us before, is really doing a great job. Reghan Coyle and Taylor Louis need to step up and bring a lot, too, and I think Brie Orr as a returning setter just brings a ton of confidence and experience into the game, and they're doing a really good job of leading together. We're going to be young in the middle, but we have some really dynamic and very sizable middles with a lot of length and height. So it should be a fun season for them as they develop, too.

Q. When you're trying to rebuild in a conference like this, are there times where maybe you have to

remind yourself that you're a better team than maybe the record shows because the conference is so good?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah. The past couple years I feel are some of the strongest teams that I've ever coached, but you're always going to get measured against the best teams in the country. So you can be really good, and it doesn't get you anything in the Big Ten. You have to be great point by point. And there were nights where we were great, and then there were nights where we weren't.

I've heard plenty of coaches say, in 30 matches in a season, you're going to have five where you play unbelievable, five where you play unbelievably terrible, and then 20 that are just kind of somewhere in the middle. We need to move our middle, and as our middle moves better, as we kind of raise the lowest common denominator, what I see is that we aren't losing "oops" matches anymore like when I first got here. And as we strengthen ourselves to be better than most, that puts us in the hunt in the Big Ten.

Now we need to be better than the best. The Big Ten is the best. We have a culture and a team and really a department that believes that that's where we are and that's where we're headed. Keeping that belief is the toughest part because it's always going to be put in question by your opponents every night in the Big Ten.

Q. What have the seniors like Molly Kelly and Reghan Coyle meant to the building of your program?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Molly Kelly and Reghan are both great Iowa stories because they both came here as walk-ons and now they're both on scholarship. They're captains, they're starters, they're all those things. That's pretty cool. I'm an Iowa kid. What a dream that would have been to be a walk-on here in any sport and then be a starter and get a scholarship. They've earned all of those things. They've earned the respect of their coaches, of their teammates, people around the department and people around the league.

What they do is kind of immeasurable in a lot of ways. The intangibles are real, and the intangibles are very Iowa. Those kids are Iowa kids. They're not afraid to get up early and throw the bale of hay or do whatever, tassel the corn. Whatever they've got to do, they're going to do it, there's lots of moments like that in being a Division I athlete that are really challenging, super inconvenient, but they've really stepped up in those roles, and it's been fun to watch them grow.

Q. Annika Olsen was one of the main leaders not only in the back row but on the entire court last season. What's your plan for the back row, and

who do you expect to step up into that leadership role?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, Molly Kelly as our senior has really worked her way into a starting libero spot, but we're going to continue to groom a couple other folks, too, and Halle Johnston and Maddie Slagle, Maddie has really been a great surprise for us in preseason training, and she's earning her way onto the court, another local product out of Cedar Rapids Jefferson. That's kind of our back line three. We always call them our little people, the back row players. It takes a lot of tall people to compete in volleyball, but it takes little people to scoop the ball off the floor and really put in the sweat equity to become what we really want to become as a team.

Q. What has Maddie brought that's surprised you through the preseason?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Slagle is really steady and super athletic, moves really well, reads well, but a lot of freshmen tend to come into a program in preseason and they want to kind of sink their way to the back wall a little bit, just kind of watch and learn and wait for their turn, and Maddie hasn't waited for her turn. She's just taken advantage of the opportunity she's been given, and it's pretty cool to watch her step up that way.

Q. In year five, as you enter the season, what's a realistic expectation for this group, especially given the attrition from graduation?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, our expectation is to stay on our mission. That's the most important part to me. The byproduct of that should be graduating, a great team GPA, should be unbelievable community involvement and kind of identification that people are proud of what we're doing and who we are. But it should also mean winning. There's no doubt about it that that's what we're all here to do, and we have that expectation.

We're careful about goals because goals kind of shortchange you and take you off your focus, but we want to stay on our mission every day, treating others really well, being unconditionally grateful, having a great attitude and giving our very, very best. We ask them to do that every single day, and when they do, they really love who they become as women and as competitors and as Hawkeyes.

Q. How much more confident or comfortable have you seen Brie (Orr) this year after getting all that experience last year as a freshman?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, Brie Orr started for us as a freshman setter. That's your quarterback. There was a lot of pressure on her at times. She had been a national champion as a junior player, as a high school player quite a few times, so she knew how to win. But

again, biggest stage, highest level. What we see with her now is she has competition in the gym. Last year she was frankly our only setter, so there was never competition for her. Now Courtney Buzzerio is pushing her for starting time, and she's really blossomed. She's figured out what she's greatest at, and that's team leadership, really positive dynamic, leadership on the court, and really distributing the ball, and I've watched her play better this preseason than I've seen her play in her entire career here so far, so we're excited about what Brie is doing.

blossoms into.

Q. How beneficial is it for you guys to have (Griere) Hughes? She had over 300 kills last year. Adding her to Taylor, you have another like one-two punch there.

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, Griere Hughes transferred in to us this year, and she is super dynamic. It's funny with a transfer, you tend not to know very much about them because the transfer recruiting process happens in the blink of an eye, so you watch a little bit of video, you kind of remember them when they played in high school. Griere is like the energizer bunny. I'm shocked all practice long, all preseason long. She's our highest jumper every time as we monitor those jumps. And she's got just a really wicked arm swing right now. She's added a lot.

Our phrase that we use with our team is find your uniqueness and exploit it to serve the team, and Griere has some really cool uniqueness, like all of our players do. So it's been fun to see her kind of meld in and figure out who we are as competitors but also what she can do as an individual athlete.

Q. Any other newcomers that you're looking to make a quick impact, or is it kind of a wait and see, bide your time kind of thing with some of those other newcomers?

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, Courtney Buzzerio is going to be interesting, the Buzzy sisters. Meghan has already been here for a few years and really does a nice job. Courtney is probably the tallest setter in the country at 6'5", so that gives her a lot of different uniqueness. She's a tremendous blocker. She's very offensive at the net. She has great hands and a really great serve, too. We're going to find ways to utilize Courtney as she keeps finding ways to show the need for us to utilize her, and what we're reminding them is that whether you're on the A side or the B side every day in practice that the net is see-through. We can see you anywhere in the gym. There's no hiding if you're performing well or you're performing poorly. Courtney is continuing to grow and improve even on the B side a lot.

I think it's going to be interesting to see what she