

# University of Iowa Volleyball

## Media Conference

Friday, August 19, 2016

## Bond Shymansky

Volleyball Team



**BOND SHYMANSKY:** Thanks for being here. First and foremost, we appreciate you taking the time and sharing the interest in our program. We are, as always, super excited about the start of the season and looking forward to the continued growth of our program and the fabulous women that are competing every day so hard to be great Hawkeyes.

When we talk about being great Hawkeyes, we talk about developing our true mental toughness. That's our slogan for this year, "Mission TMT". "True Mental Toughness" is defined very simply as having a great attitude, giving others your very best, treating others really well, and being unconditionally grateful regardless of your circumstances. As we work to do that on a day-by-day, minute-by-minute basis, we know that those types of measures of true mental toughness are what will allow us to really be successful as individuals and as a team.

We have great new young comers to our program, a couple transfers also that have come in and added a lot of depth and skill, and obviously a lot of returning players, which is always a good thing to have when you're competing in the best conference in the country. We're looking forward to the start of our nonconference schedule as well as Big Ten play. Our group continues to work very hard in training every day as we get to kind of the end of our preseason practice schedule. We've been doing two-a-days a lot, weight training on top of that, a lot of team building activities as well.

We had a great experience up at Camp Courageous the other day, up near Monticello, and continue to do things like that as we think about the whole person that we're becoming, not just a volleyball part or aspect of what we're doing. So, again, thanks for being here and I'm really looking forward to a fantastic season.

**Q. Coach, you've had so many great highlights like the Texas A&M match, the Iowa State match. Is the next step to get those big highlights in October and November too? What needs to be done for that to happen in Big Ten play?**

**BOND SHYMANSKY:** Yeah, we want to be able to continue that level of success that we showed in the preconference last year. We had great wins over Iowa State and Texas A&M, and it was really a launching

point and belief for our group that we are capable of competing at the highest level. The Big Ten will test your true mental toughness, so that's what we really need to make sure that we're examining, striving for, and kind of holding ourselves accountable for as we get deeper into October, November, and December.

It is a grind, and it's grueling, and there's this weird combination of you're running a marathon because it's arduous, but it's also a sprint every single point. And if you're paying attention right now to the Olympic games in Rio, every day, all night, you can find volleyball on there, and it's spectacular. Men's, women's, indoor, outdoor, and it's the best players in the world. And you start to see the power elements, you also start to see the pressure elements.

It's amazing how I keep reminding our group, even the Olympic champion will falter at the service line and make mental mistakes on what seems like the easiest skills of volleyball, but they're out there just taking haymaker swings every time, working so hard to have no conscience and to have a fearless mentality after making an error, coming back out and doing it all again even better.

So our group's learning a lot in the process of watching. As we talk about and watch the Olympic experience, it is just a good reminder for us that we have to stay focused and present on the point-by-point contact.

We're excited about our Big Ten slate. I think it's a healthier conference slate for us this year, and it's a little more balanced than last year. We really had to run the gauntlet right out of the gate last year. This has a lot better balance, and I think it will provide us a better opportunity to stay tougher mentally and keep our momentum for a little bit longer. There are no guaranteed wins in our conference, that's for sure.

So we want to go out there and be able to play our best volleyball, but also find some big-win moments and we'll get that. We'll get that out of our conference slate. We're really looking forward to that.

**Q. As you're taking these next steps, how do you balance using those big wins to motivate your players as well as just looking forward and not**

**dwelling on the past? How do you balance that?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: Part of what you're talking about is rebound-ability. How do you rebound? And it is a point-by-point thing, it's a day-by-day thing, and ultimately we accept that we might have losses. I've never coached an undefeated season and most coaches haven't. So we'll play 32 matches, and you're likely to have a loss here and there, so how we respond to that is pretty important.

It is, you know, it's a thing for our group that we continue to work on as we're growing and changing and evolving as a program. It takes a little bit of time, but the time is now.

I had a really interesting conversation with our long-time wrestling coach, Dan Gable, and he came in and just said, "You know, Bond, the longer, the longer." He's like, "The longer that the program has not been winning, the longer it will take for it to win and there has to be a certain level of patience." Well, that's good when you're retired, so I kind of chuckled.

But we want it right now, and our team wants it right now, and their four years goes by really fast. So we're really looking to our four seniors who will all be out on the court, I'm sure, as a starting kind of element for our group and really a core. We're looking for them to make the most out of their fourth and final year, and that moment needs to come. Four years is long enough for them.

I know they felt really proud of beating Iowa State last year. We get another shot of doing that in Ames this year. We like that in-state rival component. We need to go out there and do more damage in Big Ten play too.

**Q. Can you talk about some of the individuals that you're looking forward to that you think will have a good season this year?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, we have a lot of great depth this year, and that's to our benefit for sure. Lauren Brobst is a returning outside hitter for us. She was our top point scorer last year as a senior. Loxley Keala is our starting setter, and she's doing a fantastic job, and Ashley Mariani has come on as our middle attacker, and this is her second season with us as she transferred here from Tennessee her senior season.

So Ashley had kind of a nagging foot injury for her first year here and was really maybe not clicking on all cylinders. We saw her get back to full health when we took our team trip to Europe and saw what she could do. It was finally there. It was really exciting, and she's carried that into preseason where she's very dominant as an attacker, working really hard and very quick.

Then Alyssa Klostermann, as a DS for us and also a back-up setter. She's adding a lot as a senior leader.

Then we have some newcomers that are really helping add some depth in Kasey Reuter, as well as in Meghan Buzzerio two outside hitters. Some of our younger outside hitters with Reagan Davey and Cali Hoyo are doing a nice job. So I called them the four-headed monster the other day because in practice, not exactly maybe what young women want to hear, but I'm like, no, that's a cool thing. That's a basketball terminology they sometimes use when they're cycling a lot of centers into the game to add size or depth. And we finally have four players that are all competing for one spot. We have depth and that will allow the cream to rise in our gym on a daily basis and also give us options when we're out there competing. Because not every day is everybody's best day, so now maybe we have different kinds of answers.

We've challenged our team to find their uniqueness and exploit it in the service of their teammate. So we want each player to figure out what they are unique at and find a way that they can give it all to their teammate. Every one of our players has something a little bit different to offer, and my job as a coach is to figure out how to put that all together and the puzzle to fit where it can be something that wins.

Then in addition to that, Molly Kelly is doing a great job in the back row for us, as well as Annika Olsen as our starting libero, and, again, just a lot of returning starters into our lineup, which is great.

**Q. Just to be clear, who is the four-headed monster?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, who is part of the four-headed monster? Well, we have five outside hitters, Lauren Brobst has kind of solidified herself as one of our starters, but the other four are Meghan Buzzerio, Cali Hoyo and Reagan Davey and Kasey Reuter.

**Q. One of the coaches talked about the benefit of the overseas trip the team took. Can you talk about how much that benefited your program?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: Yeah, the European trip was great for us. And first of all, for us to recognize the boosters that made it happen, and particularly Bud and Georgia Johnson. It was great for them to kind of underwrite the cost to go do that. It was two weeks and we got to really experience a lot.

They were out of their comfort zone in many ways, both at times from an accommodations standpoint, which is good. They're actually in a place in the world that still doesn't have air conditioning, they were shocked by that. And a place where McDonald's doesn't exist, and they were shocked by that. It was really good.

Taking them out of the comfort zone in terms of volleyball because the international game is very different. So we got to play against some professional teams. We got to play against some junior national teams, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Poland and then Ireland on the way back. It was just a fantastic trip. A life-changing experience, a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and a fantastic team-building experience. To get to take a group of young people to a place like Auschwitz was astounding and super impactful.

To get to take them into a town in Poland and play in front of a big crowd and meet new people and see that volleyball people all over the world are the same. They're really great people and very friendly and kind and love the sport. That was just a really tremendous opportunity, I thought, for us as a staff and so as maybe leaders or adults in their world to open up the whole world to them was just great.

We have so many different memories, pictures, and stories that we were able to take away and all kinds of funny things that I think they'll remember more than any win or loss. That's the sad reality of sports, but that's the reality.

I tell them all the time, I can't remember already. I can't remember most of the points that we played over in Europe, but I can remember every place we went and I remember every meal we had and every person we met. So there are great story lines that happen outside of sports as well.

**Q. You mentioned the returning seniors that are returners to the team, but it's still a pretty young squad. So going back to that rebound ability, how do you teach young women to rebound so quickly?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: How do you teach any athlete to rebound quickly? That is the true mental toughness thing. Can you be unconditionally grateful regardless of your circumstance? Your circumstance might be the scoreboard tells you you're losing or you've just made a terrible error. Those are things that you just have to bounce back from.

We have to do a good job of modelling that and showing that as a staff. We have to point that out when we're in practice. If a lot of what we're doing is actually truly mental, there is a physical quotient, but they're all talented. They're Division I, Big Ten Iowa Hawkeyes. These are talented people.

But pointing out how are you responding? What are you doing? What are your non-verbals like? What is your self-talk like? How are you responding to your teammates as they're trying to give you their very, very best also?

So it's a work in progress, and every year you get new people into your environment and those new people come in as the all-star where they were from and now they feel like the rookie. When they do, they tend to turtle up a little bit, and they get shy and they get quiet and they get that overwhelming sense of, oh, my gosh, I'm not the best anymore and what do I do now? So that's part of the journey and every player takes a different amount of time for them to overcome that.

But that's what we're here for to just help them do it and serve them the best we can as the coaching staff can do.

**Q. How do you measure improvement going back to what you said earlier? Whether it's practice to practice or year to year, how do you measure that?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: The simplest way to measure improvement is statically when you look at player by player, you can do it set by set, you can do it match by match. The cut-to-the-chase-point is do you win more? What is your record? I always say I have one of the weirdest jobs. People will say, what do you do? Well, I coach volleyball at Iowa. And they'll look at me and say, are you any good? Is your team good? What was your record? And it's such a quick way for people to evaluate whether or not you're successful.

Why it's ironic to me is I've never met a doctor and said, how many patients have you lost? Did you cut straight? I don't know how to ask those questions, but people understand how to cut to the chase and ask about winning and losing. It is a powerful way to measure it, but that is what I am here to do, win.

If we take the mantra correctly, win, graduate, do it right. We know we're going to graduate our players. We have a 100% graduation rate and we know we're going to do it right. We're going to treat our players really well. We're going to push them to be excellent and show them the way to do that. But then that needs to yield winning. It's been a really great journey in that way so far. Like I said, I have a certain amount of patience for it, but now it's year three. It's time.

Like we knew it was time last year, we said, we're ready. We're going to go get some of these teams. Iowa State, Texas A&M won the SEC, that's great. They're a really good team. But we have bigger opportunities in front of us also in the Big Ten.

So this year our out-of-conference we have a home tournament. We'll host Arizona State from the Pac-12, that's a really a big match. We open at Northern Illinois the first weekend. We need to go over there and take care of business with the teams that we'll see with Loyola, DePaul and Northern Illinois.

To play at Iowa State is a lot of fun for us, and it's actually the same weekend as the Iowa-Iowa State football game here, so we'll be up in Ames while the Hawkeyes are going on the gridiron here in Iowa City. But it's a really great event weekend for us as it keeps building and building and building.

We love being part of the Hawkeye success, and we love being part of the whole athletic department. We don't view ourselves as one single thing. We continue to work harder to involve ourselves with more programs and with more other student-athletes. We've done a couple different things. We had a team picnic last Saturday with men's and women's swimming and diving. We played kickball, Ultimate Frisbee, Wiffle Ball, sand volleyball, and we had an egg toss. We had all these great things going. It was really neat for us. We have women's golf coming in tomorrow, and I'm going to run them through the ringer on the volleyball court and it's going to be a lot of fun.

So things like that that we get the opportunity to do are about the sense of the whole community and what it means to be a Hawkeye.

**Q. Is there anything else that came out of that meeting with Dan Gable that stuck with you?**

BOND SHYMANSKY: Man, put me on the spot. That was really enough. It wasn't a long meeting. The longer, the longer. He didn't need to say that for very long. I had the pleasure of coaching one of Dan's daughters when I coached club and high school volleyball back here a long, long time ago, 25 years ago maybe. Got to know their family and certainly have tons of respect for them.

You can't help but know the tradition and the intensity and the integrity of what it's all about, and we love being across the hall from the wrestling staff and have really gotten to know the Brands brothers well and the whole group there. We have a lot of fun, and you need to actually have a lot of fun as a coach because it is so intense and so serious and so breakneck speed all the time. That if you can't figure out how to laugh every once in a while, then you're missing the point.

We found a cut out of Tom Brands, like a life-sized cutout, and it's hiding in my office somewhere. He doesn't know where it's at. But every once in a while I just bring it out and take it somewhere. And it's like, hey, me and Tom hanging out at blank. Or Tom dropped in by our practice to say blank. And we keep tweeting it out or putting it on Facebook, and he keeps trying to come and find the cutout, but we've got it in a good hiding spot.

We enjoy each other a lot. Same thing with Fran or

with Bluder or all of the coaches in the building that I've had the pleasure to get to know over the span of the last three years. Just makes for a really cool environment that way.