

Penn State Lady Lion Basketball
Head Coach Carolyn Kieger Postgame Press Conference
January 25, 2022 vs. Iowa

Opening Statement: First, I want to give a lot of credit to Iowa and Coach [Lisa] Bluder. I've been watching them for a long time, very respectful of what they do as a program and how they've built it. We're going to work tirelessly to build a program like that, that has sustained success year after year. A player like Caitlin Clark is a catalyst and one of the best guards in the country. I can't say enough about Makenna Marisa as well, 40th 1,000-point scorer in the program. Just a relentless worker, gym rat and she's just going to keep getting better and better. I'm excited for her teammates to continue to have that contagious energy because she's going to continue to make us better and we're going to surround her with other players that we can build this program and get us to a stage where we're competing with these top 25 teams. These are learning lessons, but we've got a lot to do to get there and we obviously have to fix our defense.

Q: *Your team played really well in the first half kept the close. Obviously, you guys' sort of lost pace with Iowa in the second half. What happened?*

A: I don't know if giving up 52 points in a half is what I would say "good". I thought we were more confident on offense. So yes, our offense was a little bit better with pace, but I think our defense was equally poor in both halves. Obviously as a team, and as a coach, you're never going to be happy when a team shoots 60% on you, especially on your home floor. So, lots to fix and lots to watch and lots of correct.

Q: *In the first half when Iowa was hitting everything it seemed, how were you able to keep your team in the game?*

A: I mean, obviously Iowa is one of the best teams in the country, especially offensively. The way they move the ball, they put on a clinic with 37 assists. Being somebody who really values passing, it's pretty to watch. I'll say this; Caitlin Clark is good for the game, she's really good for women's basketball. You can see that she inspires her teammates to do the same. When she shares the ball, her teammates share the ball and their rhythm on offense is very hard to disrupt. You play man, they're going to throw it inside, you play zone, they're going to hit threes. They put a clinic on us tonight.

Q: *What can you say about Makenna. Iowa built a big lead in that second quarter, and she kept making shot after shot?*

A: Yeah, she's fearless. I've been around a lot of players and a lot of great guards, and she's got just as great work ethic as anyone that I've coached, played in the league, or two time all Americans that have brought our teams to top eight in the country and I have zero doubt that she's going to do that for us. It's my job to put more weapons around her and get people around her that can compete at the level she can. But I've coached the best guards in the country and she's right up there with them, especially from a work ethic standpoint. I just can't wait for her to keep getting better, show her the game, and surround her with pieces that can compete.

Q: Makenna obviously scored her 1,000-point tonight. What about her really embodies being a Penn Stater and a Lady Lion?

A: Everything. All she wants to do is win for the jersey. You know her grandpa hung banners here and that's what she wants to do. All she cares about is leaving that jersey in a better place. To coach someone that's as selfless as that doesn't really get any better than that. It's our part to keep making her better and keep putting pieces around her that can get her to her goals and dreams.

Q: What about Makenna's improvement year-to-year has really brought her to this achievement and moment?

A: She's always been a hard worker and a gym rat. I think the biggest jump she's made is in the film room. She started to learn the game, increase her IQ, and that's what separates elite players from good players. It's that calm, cool, collected piece that she continues to work on daily.

Q: What kind of comparisons do you see between Caitlin Clark and Makenna Marisa?

A: Both of them are three level scorers. They can score from the three, they can score with the ball in their hands, and they can score without the ball in their hands. Both of them also have great vision. Obviously, Clark rebounds which is something Makenna can try and do a little more. But very similar mindset of how they approach the game.