

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CHICAGO STATE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES MISTY OPAT AND LANCE IRVIN AS NEW WOMEN'S AND MEN'S HEAD BASKETBALL COACHES Hiring of New Coaches Signals Watershed Moment in CSU Athletics History**

**CHICAGO** – Chicago State University (CSU) today announced the selection of two new head coaches for the school's women's and men's basketball teams. Misty Opat will lead the CSU's women's team and Lance Irvin will lead CSU's men's team. Both coaches bring significant Division I experience, a passionate commitment to off-court achievement, and award-winning track records of success at both National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) schools and National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) schools.

"The hiring of Misty Opat and Lance Irvin marks a new day for Chicago State University," said Z Scott, President of CSU. "We are delighted to have them aboard and look forward to their positive influence in our school community."

According to CSU Athletic Director, Chris Zorich, "Throughout their careers, both coaches have demonstrated a commitment to inspiring their teams to achieve excellence on and off the court, making them the ideal additions to the CSU family as we commit to strengthening the school's athletic and academic programs."

#### About Coach Opat:

Opat comes to CSU most recently from Rock Valley College in Rockford, Ill., where she led her team to victory in four of the last seven NJCAA Division III National Championships. She also brings seven years of experience at the NCAA Division I level, including assisting the University of Kansas to two Big 12 conference championships and two NCAA Sweet 16 appearances. Opat was named Spalding NJCAA Division III National Coach of the Year in 2015 and 2017, the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Coach of the Year six times, the Region IV Coach of the Year seven times, the District 2 Coach of the Year 5 times, and the Coach of the NJCAA DIII National Tournament four times.

"I'm thrilled to be joining Chicago State University as head coach of the women's basketball team, which is a hidden gem in an incredible basketball city," Opat says. "I have always focused equally on the athletic achievements and academic accomplishments of student athletes, and CSU's shared commitment to those goals makes this program an ideal fit. I'm proud to lead this team of incredible women to victory."

#### About Coach Irvin:

Irvin has broad coaching experience at both the collegiate and high school levels, and he has deep ties to basketball in the Chicago area as a former star high school player. Irvin comes to CSU most recently from Chicago's Morgan Park High School where he served as varsity boys assistant basketball coach and dean of students. His previous collegiate experience includes men's associate head basketball coach at Southern Illinois University and assistant coach at

*(more)*

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Southern Methodist University, University of Missouri, Texas A&M University, Iowa State University and Loyola University.

Throughout his career, Irvin has helped several players reach the NBA, including Jackson Vroman (Iowa State), Paul McPherson (DePaul), Antoine Wright and Acie Law (Texas A&M). He has also coached several stand-outs, including Tommy Kleinschmidt (DePaul), Brandon Cole (DePaul), Brian Mullins and Kevin Dillard (SIUC), Billy Garrett, Jr. (Morgan Park-DePaul), Cal Davis (Morgan Park-Dayton-Rio Grande Valley Vipers), Charlie Moore (Morgan Park-Kansas), Josh Cunningham (Morgan Park-Dayton) and Ayo Dosunmu (Morgan Park-University of Illinois).

“I couldn’t be happier to be joining Chicago State University as head coach of the men’s basketball team, which is a tremendous group of athletes ready to make their mark,” Irvin said. “This is an exciting time to join CSU, and I look forward to helping this team unlock its potential and achieve great things for the school and the city of Chicago.”

“Lance and Misty have impressive histories of building strong relationships with their student athletes and inspiring them to overcome adversity,” said Zorich. “This is the first step in building a world-class athletics program that creates leaders both on and off the court, and I can’t think of two people better for the job than Lance and Misty.”

The women’s basketball team kicks off its 2018-19 season November 6th against Xavier University (Ohio) and the men’s team makes its debut November 7th against Indiana University. For the coaches pictures, more information, or to purchase tickets, please visit [www.gocsucougars.com](http://www.gocsucougars.com).

Coach Opat and Coach Lavin will host a press conference Wednesday, August 8th at noon at the Jones Convocation Center at Chicago State, 9501 S. King Dr., Chicago, IL 60628.

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*About Chicago State University:*

*Chicago State University (CSU) is a public, comprehensive post-secondary institution that provides access to higher education for students of diverse backgrounds and educational needs. Founded in 1867 to meet the demand for a trained teaching force, CSU is home to Illinois’ oldest College of Education and stands distinctively as one of the state’s oldest public universities. [www.csu.edu](http://www.csu.edu).*

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## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT CSU'S NEW HEAD BASKETBALL COACHES LANCE IRVIN AND MISTY OPAT...

*"Without my loved ones in my life I would not have had the foundation of discipline and hard work it took to reach the next level. From the years I've known Lance, he has been nothing but the best. He has been a great example for others and myself who have been under his wing as former players of his. The relationship that we all formed goes beyond basketball and more importantly it's a friendship that his former players will always cherish. Thank you, Lance and your family, for always having my best interest at heart. Chicago State Basketball has a great leader among them."*

Jabari Parker  
Chicago Bulls Player

*"Lance Irvin is a terrific hire for Chicago State. I've known Lance since his days as a young assistant coach and he knows Chicago basketball as well as anyone. He has the ability to develop relationships and connect both with his players and recruits. He has a wealth of experience as a college assistant coach, and he's not afraid to roll up his sleeves and put in the hard work it takes to be successful. Perhaps most importantly, he'll provide his team a first-hand example of how to rise above the adversity that we all face in life. I'm excited and proud of Lance's journey. He did not feel sorry for himself when facing his battle with leukemia. Now cancer free, he will use that inner strength to mentor and motivate his student-athletes at Chicago State as he takes the Cougar program to the next level."*

Tom Izzo  
Head Men's Basketball Coach  
Michigan State University

*"Lance Irvin is an excellent hire for Chicago State University. Irvin is bright, energetic, hardworking and a great coach. He has experience beyond his years and has worked for excellent great coaches through the years. I am confident he will be an asset to not only the basketball program, but the entire Chicago State University community."*

Robert Smith  
Head Men's Basketball Coach  
Simeon High School

*"Coach Opat has all of the intangibles of a winning coach! She truly cares about her players on and off the field and wants the absolute best for them! I was successful because I had coaches in my corner that took a genuine interest in guiding and directing me. Coach Opat was a direct part of my success. She knows the game! She's a proven winner!"*

Tamecka Dixon  
Retired 12 year WNBA  
3 X WNBA All-Star

*"Congratulations to Misty on her position at Chicago State University as Head Women's Basketball Coach. Over the years I have watched her accomplish extraordinary endeavors as a coach and as a wonderful woman. She cares for your family and players while working the long hours required in coaching. Her passion for teaching is reflected in the spirit of her teams and all those around her. It has been a privilege and honor to recognize her achievements and to call her a friend."*

Marian E. Washington  
Former Head Women's Basketball Coach  
University of Kansas

*"Chicago State is getting an absolute champion in every sense of the word to lead their women's basketball program. In almost twenty years of college athletics I've seen very few people who have been able set, maintain and model a standard of excellence like Misty Opat. She has had amazing levels of success on the court as evidenced by the national championship rings but, as importantly, has used athletics to transform the lives of hundreds of student-athletes. This is home run hire by any measure for Cougars!"*

Kevin Vest  
Athletic Director  
Waubensee Community College