



Kara Lawson

SPORTS PERSONALITY

Duke Women's Basketball Head Coach, Olympic Gold Medalist, and Former WNBA Player and NBA Assistant Coach



VISIT KARA'S WEBSITE

About:

- **Gender:** Female
- **Nationality:** United States
- **Languages:** English
- **Travels from:** United States

Engagement Types:

- Speaking

Topics:

- DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion)
- Leadership & Management

Websites:

- [Duke](#)

Biography Highlights

- Creator of the viral “Handle Hard Better” philosophy, motivating leaders and teams worldwide
- NCAA Final Four player, WNBA champion, Olympic gold medalist and coach—one of an elite trio achieving all three
- Led Duke University to the 2025 ACC Championship and an Elite Eight NCAA finish

Biography

Motivating millions when her “Handle Hard Better” pep talk went viral on social media, Coach Kara Lawson has reached beyond her team of players to inspire audiences around the world. Sharing experiences gained as an Olympic gold medalist (both player and coach), WNBA champion, groundbreaking sports broadcaster, first Black coach of Duke’s women’s basketball program, first female coach in Boston Celtics history, and player for legendary coach Pat Summitt, Coach Kara challenges and inspires all of us to reach our full potential and focus on our dreams.

Lawson brought her decorated basketball career, both on and off the court, to the Blue Devils after spending the 2020 season as an assistant coach with the Boston Celtics. She helped Boston to a 43-21 record and a

third-place standing in the Eastern Conference prior to the stoppage of the 2019-20 NBA season due to COVID-19. Lawson was the Celtics first female coach in the franchise's 73-year history.

Lawson helped Team USA make history in the summer of 2021 as she guided the United States 3x3 Women's National Team to a gold medal in its Olympic debut in Tokyo. It marked her 10th overall gold medal in USA Basketball competition and seventh as a coach. Lawson is one of only three women in Olympic history to win gold as both a player and head coach in basketball, joining Anne Donovan and Dawn Staley.

A four-time All-SEC selection and two-time All-America choice at Tennessee, Lawson played for the late Pat Summitt and led the Lady Vols to three NCAA Final Four appearances during her collegiate career. Lawson's playing career has her in elite company as she is one of only three NCAA Division I women's basketball coaches to play in a NCAA Final Four, win a WNBA Championship and win an Olympic Gold Medal (Lindsay Whalen of Minnesota and Cynthia Cooper-Dyke of Texas Southern).

Her impact on the women's basketball community is evident as she was named one of the 100 most influential people in women's college basketball, as announced by Silver Waves Media in the summer of 2020. Lawson is also a founding board member of the Boston Celtics United for Social Justice.

Following an exceptional playing career, Lawson spent two years as the primary television analyst for the Washington Wizards while also broadcasting games for ESPN Radio. In addition to her role covering the Wizards for NBC Sports Washington, Lawson served as a game and studio analyst for men's and women's college basketball and the NBA for ESPN. On January 12, 2007, she became the first female analyst for a nationally-televised NBA game. Lawson also served as a color announcer during the 2021 Olympics in Tokyo with NBC.

Videos



Kara's Topics

Handle Hard Better: Building Resilient Leaders and Teams

Coach Kara Lawson, an NCAA All-American, Olympic Gold Medalist, WNBA Champion, and trailblazing coach, delivers one of the most powerful messages in leadership today: life doesn't get easier—you get better at handling hard things. In this inspiring talk, Lawson shares the mindset shift behind her viral “Handle Hard Better” speech, which has been viewed by millions around the world. Drawing from her experience as a player, broadcaster, and coach at the highest levels, including the NBA, NCAA, and Team USA, Kara shows organizations how to reframe challenges as opportunities for growth, build resilience in the face of constant change, and lead with clarity when the pressure is highest. Audiences walk away with a renewed perspective on perseverance, adaptability, and the belief that success belongs to those who handle hard well.

Available: In person, Virtually

Testimonials

“

Wow, what a great time we had with her! I can't tell you how many times I've already been hearing things like.. “Coach Kara said....earlier when Kara mentioned..it's just like coach said yesterday..” so our team has really taken the pep talk to heart. It was very relatable and absolutely, wonderfully motivational!!

Capital One

“

Coach Lawson was incredible, and we have heard nothing but positive feedback from attendees and staff. Her message aligned so well with our organization's mission and values.

TeamMates Mentoring Program

“

Everyone really enjoyed hearing her perspective, and many noted how captivating her energy was virtually. We really appreciated her candor and realness.

Capital One

Speaker Bureaus And Talent Agencies

Kara Lawson is available to book via these agencies



Recommended

EXCLUSIVE



Speaking Agency



Speaking Agency