

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Iowa vs UConn

Saturday, March 27, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - River Walk

Iowa Hawkeyes

Caitlin Clark

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



UConn 92, Iowa 72

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. I'm guessing over the last couple weeks, especially, there have been a lot of little girls around the country who have watched you, want to be like you, play in the NCAA tournament. What would you say to them in regards to you can pick what school you want to go to, it doesn't have to be UConn, doesn't have to be Tennessee? You talked the other day about the bluebloods. What you want to say to those kids?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I mean, the reason I came to Iowa is because I wanted to do something special. I think more and more people are starting to kind of go that route. I think that's important, especially this being my home state, this is where I wanted to go. I know I'm in the right place. This season was truly special.

I think for this team, it's only up from here. So I know a lot of little girls dream about going to all those bluebloods, but I think playing for your home state is really something special. Creating something is really special. That's my goal here. I have three years left to do a lot of special things. I think for this team, we're so young, we can put in so much more work, improve in so many areas, it should be fun down the stretch for us, for sure.

Q. I know when you came in, you had expectations of competing in games like this. Outside the program the expectation wasn't for you guys to make the tournament. Here you are trading buckets with UConn in the Sweet 16. How do you think this changed your minds in what can be accomplished in the next couple years? How important was this experience, getting to a Final Four, a championship game down the road?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I don't think it really changed our minds just because we've always believed in each other. That's the reason I came here, because there was a true belief we were going to make the Final Four someday. We didn't say we were going to do it in my first year. We knew it was going to be a process, we had to put all the pieces together. To see what we did this year with nobody believing in us, we believed in ourselves, everybody in the locker room, the coaches, the girls, we just kept believing. We had some tough losses but went back to work every single day and wanted to get better. I think that really showed at the end of the season, through the Big Ten tournament, obviously the NCAA tournament. To get to where we got is really something special. Obviously a lot to be proud of this season.

Obviously we're disappointed with the outcome today, but it's good to look back and see what we did this season.

Q. Coach Auriemma pulled you aside, kind of wiggled his finger and had you come over after the game. What was said there between the two of you?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, he was pretty much just like, You're crazy good, whatnot. Things like that. He's like, it's kind of a shame it had to be so much pressure on you and Paige. I could tell you guys were so antsy in the first half, which I think is kind of true. I think we were kind of could feel that pressure in a way. I took a few poor shots. I think we both kind of calmed down there in the second half.

Obviously it is a lot of pressure for two freshmen. Those are the games we want to play in. Those are the moments we live for. We wouldn't want it to change any other way.

To have him come up to me and say the things he did, he said, What you've done for Iowa this season really has been something special, you have a bright future. To hear him say that to me really meant something. To take the time to wave me down and talk to me obviously meant a lot and I'm very thankful for that.

Q. You got to measure yourselves against one of the best programs in the country. Obviously disappointment right now. What do you take and learn



from this going forward? Where does that put the expectations at for the next few years now?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, obviously I don't think the score really indicated how the game really ended. Obviously kind of ballooned there a little at the end. We really stayed with them, kept fighting, kept knocking down shots. I think if we clean up a few more things, a couple more shots fall down for us, a couple more things go our way, I think we're right there, a two to four-point game really.

I think being so young, that just shows we have so much more to work for, but we're so close. I think that's just something we can feed on the rest of the season, the next few seasons down the road. I think that's what we're going to work on in the off-season, look back, what do we need to improve, and get better at. Having this offseason is going to be so important for us especially returning our whole starting five and a solid bench as well, just to improve in every single area that kind of got exploited this season.

I'm excited. We're all going to get back to work, I know we are going to work super hard. I think the future is super bright.

Q. About young girls, there are so many more young girls playing basketball who now know you. They're inspired by you. What message do you have for them right now?

CAITLIN CLARK: Thanks. I feel like I was that little girl just a short while ago. So I would just say dream big. That's always what I did. My parents never held me back from anything that you couldn't do. I think that's just the biggest thing.

Q. UConn, it was no secret how they were going to defend you, go about this game. What did you think of the defense they played on you, particularly in the first half?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, honestly, I mean, I've seen tough defenses all year. I think the Big Ten is loaded with quite a few teams that are loaded defensively. They move together, they play team defense. Obviously I've been denied all year long. It wasn't really anything new. I think I took a few too many tough shots in the first half. At the same time I'm not going to get too many open looks. A couple more go down, maybe it's a different story. But I think in the second half, I was a little more patient obviously. Still missed a few here and there, but made a few more.

Obviously they're a good overall team. We knew what they

were going to do on defense - they were going to deny me the ball. I don't think it was anything new that I've seen this season. That's what we've seen all throughout the Big Ten. Progressing throughout my career, it's going to be the same thing. So just learning from it, getting better, finding ways to move without the ball and things like that.

Q. Before that Michigan game, you guys had been good, but you hadn't had those top-25 wins. You blow out Michigan, you go on this run in March. What do you think was the change? What was the progress that you made in the last month here? How is that something you can apply over the summer and into next season?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think other than tonight really our defense had improved a lot, especially our man-to-man defense. I thought that had grown so much. That's kind of what we had been using all throughout the Big Ten Tournament, up here until this point, I know we played a little more zone today, but I thought we really improved on defense. Obviously when a team scores over 90 points, it's still going to be hard for us to win even though we do put up pretty big numbers on the offensive side of the ball.

Another thing, we all believed. We knew we were right there. There were so many close games through the Big Ten, those top teams we kept playing, we kept losing by two to five points every single game. There were just little mental lapses. We're young, we didn't have experience in end-of-game situations.

I think we really just learned from those, we kept believing and working. We knew those wins were going to come. I think that's what you saw here at the end of the season.

Q. Next year obviously the hype is going to be high, the expectations are going to be high. How does this team handle that? How does the team embrace that? Your thought about the Final Four being in Minneapolis next year.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yes, obviously the expectations are high. That's how it was for us this year. Even if the media or outside people didn't have high expectations for us, Coach Bluder's teams always have high expectations for themselves. I wouldn't expect anything less.

We're going to work how we always do, not going to put too much pressure on ourselves. I think more than anything we're excited to have fans back in Carver, get that excitement rolling again.

I think people are just going to be super excited about Iowa women's basketball. I think we're going to have a lot of

fans in the arena. That's what makes the game so fun. That's what you love to do.

Obviously with the Final Four in Minnesota, that's super cool. I honestly didn't know that. To keep it in the Midwest, I guess that's great. Obviously that's a long, long road ahead before we're there, so...

Q. You might have answered this a little bit, but what did you guys learn about yourselves at how good you guys can really be, considering how we talked all year long about how young this team is? You seemed to show potential, we really saw it in this last month and a half.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think it just gave so much confidence to the girls on this team, to the program, everything. I think it just shows, like, we're legit. We can hang with the best, whatnot.

I mean, more than anything, I think it's just going to make every single person in that locker room want to work that much harder, get that much better, just knowing we're so close to being with UConn. 10 points away, I would probably say, even though the score ballooned at the end.

We're just going to work harder, want to get better. That's all you really can get, get back in the gym, get better, be with your team. Honestly this team always believes. I think that's the greatest thing about us. We never hung our heads when we lost early in the season, things like that. We just kept wanting to get better. We knew those wins were about to come our way. I think that's what you're going to see next year, too.

Q. You obviously got to play in the first game of the tournament that allowed outside fans. How exciting was that? How hopeful are you that we're on the road to normalcy again?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, obviously that was really special. I think there were quite a few Hawk fans down here. It was good to hear that noise again, and get back to normalcy. Obviously it's been a long time. I would say this isn't really a normal thing to have fans. But to get back to that normalcy, it's going to be fun. I can't wait for it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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