

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 10, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

UConn Huskies

Dan Hurley

Alex Karaban

Adama Sanogo

Postgame Media Conference



Connecticut, 68 - Marquette, 70

DAN HURLEY: Obviously, disappointing loss. I just thought Marquette really, really jumped us to start the game. I don't think we anticipated their ball pressure. I thought they really, really got after us to start the game, put us on our heels.

Obviously, we were fortunate to go and tie it. And then just put ourselves, you know, put ourselves behind the 8-ball, just giving up 18 points the first five minutes of the second half. Obviously, mixing in some zone and some different things, you know. We limited them for the remainder of the game, but I just thought we lost the game beginning of the second half, just 18 points in five minutes or whatever it was.

Q. For anyone, obviously, you guys wanted this bad. Are you confident you'll be able to bounce back next week in the NCAA tournament, get right back, get the confidence for that?

ALEX KARABAN: I'm more than confident in our team. We came into this being one of the hottest teams in the country. We're not going to let one game set us back. This is heartbreaking. It's crushing us right now. It's going to crush us for the next day. We've got to move quickly and continue to have trust in what we've done the entire season. We can't have one game break us.

ADAMA SANOGO: Of course, going to painful for it a little bit. But we have to let it go by tomorrow. And over the next couple hours, we have to let it go and get ready for next week. We're going to bounce back for sure next week.

Q. In the final 2:08, the shots didn't fall. You hit your last three pointer at the 9:25 mark in the half. What were your plans? What were your messages to the team for offense coming out in those closing moments?

DAN HURLEY: I thought we got some great looks at 3s there, down two, in transition. Couple 3s to get us the lead. You know, we just -- this time of year, obviously, our defense early in the second half let us down, but we toughened up a lot.

On the backboard, the second half, you know, in the end, you know, this time of year in March, you got to make shots in big spots, especially against teams of Marquette's caliber. Obviously, it felt like a Sweet 16 type of game, Elite Eight type of game.

Obviously, Andre, to have him as a non-factor with the foul trouble, that hurt, obviously, a lot as well. He's heart and soul of the team and one of our best players.

I thought we had chances to take the lead and surge ahead. Just didn't make the shots.

Q. Coach, how impressed were you, even though it was a losing effort, how impressed were you with the bench looking like -- bringing the productivity you saw when you started off 14-0?

DAN HURLEY: We have been in -- obviously, Andre basically hardly played, right? He played 14 minutes and didn't have the impact that he has for us. And then just credit Marquette. The defense was excellent. They were really physical.

To go 4 for 21 with the starting backcourt, without those two -- without Joey and Nahiem, we're not getting a sniff of it late. So the bench was big. I thought Donovan's second half minutes were much better. His first half, he looked a little bit behind plays.

But the bench is a big part of how we've been able to get to the season we've had.



Q. Dan, Villanova has been the standard bear for the Big East for the last decade. How much of an opportunity is it for UConn, Marquette, Creighton to extend what the Big East has done with some other teams?

DAN HURLEY: Frustrating thing for us, and I'll speak for where we are. Just to be back in the semis for the third straight year and, I mean, three pretty excruciating losses. We were hell-bent on playing for a championship tomorrow. That was -- I think there's no doubt in anyone's mind that we were going to, with all due respect to Marquette, we know how outstanding they are. They got a chance to be a Final Four team this year or better.

So we knew what we were going up against, but we also know we have a special team. We're not going to do what our past teams have done, which was to maybe get caught up in the wallow of losing. Big East tournament is such a big deal. The crowd is unbelievable. The atmosphere is incredible.

Losing in this environment in your conference tournament in the past couple years has put us in a bad mental state. We're not going to allow that to happen this year. We're going to get our minds right very quickly and get ready to make a run next week.

Q. Coach, you talked about the defense to start the second half. Was there a difference in the way they were playing on offense from the previous two games that really led to those open shots?

DAN HURLEY: Again, you don't want to make excuses. But when you're playing one of the best offensive -- one of the best offenses in the country like with an amazing quarterback in Kolek, we screwed up some switches and ball screens. We were really bad defensively. For us to give up 12 threes to Joplin and Jones speaks to, you know, the half a day prep that you get to play an offense like that.

I think that that hurt us with our man defense. Obviously, the zone, you know, the different zones allowed us to stabilize some things, but I just thought the short prep really, really hurt us because they're so hard to defend.

Q. You now got obviously a chance to pay for another tournament and how much you're looking forward to that, turning the page and getting ready for the next step?

DAN HURLEY: This is going to be rough. It's going to be a really terrible mental and emotional hangover I would imagine until Sunday. I think that the difference for us is

we're going to start prepping for potential opponents based on where we think we're going to be seeded, start getting a head start on who we're going to play. We're just going to turn the page quicker than we have in past years. I think, as a leader I've allowed the disappointment of losing in the semis here to linger over the group. This group is going to move quickly.

We know that -- listen, if we make one more, we get some good looks from 3, we make one more shot, we win the game versus two top ten teams that played a high-level game.

Q. Along the same lines, you dominated non-conference teams this year. Big East is such a grind. Does that give you any added confidence going into the NCAAs?

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, I think so. I think we, you know, I think in general, we have a ton of confidence. You know, this knocked us back a little bit. But I think that we know that we're capable of playing elite level defense. We've got tons of answers on offense.

I think this league battle tests you like very few conferences will battle test you. You play so many different types of styles. Games are so physical. I think that we're going to go into the tournament next week and feel like we have as good a chance as anyone to make a deep run in the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: UConn, thank you.

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