

# Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

UConn Huskies

Coach Dan Hurley

Tristen Newton

Cam Spencer

Alex Karaban

Postgame Media Conference



DAN HURLEY: Obviously the place was in a frenzy when coach got his. And then there was a guy -- there was a short guy in a red blazer that was on the court yelling at the refs, and then he started yelling at me, you know, and moving in my direction. So I was just kind of pointing out to James that he was behaving worse than Coach Pitino.

I was really just trying to help the officials, you know. They might not have seen it. And then I got a technical for pointing out more increasingly aggressive fans. At court side you shouldn't end up on the court.

**Q. At halftime it seemed like you were sort of still in the dialogue?**

DAN HURLEY: I kept him in. They were going to eject him from the game. I went over there to tell the ushers I wanted him to stay, not because I thought he was a good guy. I thought it might be bad luck. (Laughs). Karma. Not because I, you know.

**Q. What was he saying?**

DAN HURLEY: It was a lot of expletives. And, again, like all you'll see with the camera -- you're not seeing what I'm -- what's in front of me. And I'm probably now the boy who cried wolf because of late game. But I promise you if we play Marquette tomorrow night, there will be no incident because those people are incredibly classy fans and we have incredible respect for them.

**Q. What was it that St. John's was doing well in the first half?**

DAN HURLEY: Just playing great. Obviously we were in foul trouble, and it hurt our defense. You know, Jenkins is a heck of a player, Dingle is a heck of a player. There's a reason why in the preseason some people had these guys ranked in the Top-25. Ken Pom, they're a Top-25 team.

That's a high-quality group out there, and obviously Coach made -- he shifted to more of an offensive attack with the group. They're hard to guard. But I think we showed that we could win any type of game.

UConn 95, St. John's 90

DAN HURLEY: Obviously, awesome atmosphere. Thought it lived up to everything that people hoped for with this game tonight, the emotions, the intensity, the shot making. It was just a fun game to be a part of. Ultimate respect for, obviously, Coach Pitino, and how good they are in year one. I don't know what seed they'll be, but that's one of the better teams we've played, one of the more talented teams, and clearly an NCAA Tournament team.

So thrilled to get the win and excited to get to the championship tomorrow.

**Q. For Alex, very impressive win, very high-scoring game. (No microphone) to put together a solid three-point shooting effort in the first and second half.**

ALEX KARABAN: We feel like we're just so unselfish offensively that we just continue to move the ball, and continue to pass up good shots or great shots, and we did a great job of that tonight. The coaches do a great job of reading the game and just picking the plays. The plays worked. So just continue to do that, continue to execute and unselfishness. That's what makes our team so special.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

DAN HURLEY: For me?

**Q. Uh-huh.**



**Q. Dan, maybe I'll go to the players, too. You're always pretty intense, Dan. It did seem like maybe a little more so tonight. I don't know if that was the case, but I'll ask the players, did you feel like your coach was --**

DAN HURLEY: You've seen us?

**Q. No. I haven't seen a lot. That's why I want to make sure, if I say that do you think there was a little more intensity or something as you were running out to the floor pumping up your team. Did the players see anything?**

TRISTEN NEWTON: Honestly, today, I thought he was a little more calm.

DAN HURLEY: Cam, did you have a problem with me today?

CAM SPENCER: No issues, Coach.

**Q. Coach, you haven't coached in this game before, but you've played in this Big East championship game before. What do you remember from that time at Seton Hall?**

DAN HURLEY: That was a pretty long time ago. We put it on the Qs pretty good in that one. And I just think for us, obviously getting to win 30. We won 31 all of last year. So that was a big number we wanted to get to before we got to the NCAA Tournament.

And I got guys with me up on the dais here that they were looking for that last jewel in the -- not in the Triple Crown -- the Quadruple Crown: Get the regular season Big East, Final Four, National Championship, now in the Big East tournament. I know that's what Tristen and Alex and Cam are all shooting for, and we want to try and deliver.

**Q. Coach, you guys, you're very unselfish. You run the floor well. Have we seen the best of what you guys can do and what would you like to improve on with your team right now?**

DAN HURLEY: Obviously the defense let us down. We had been trending -- coming into the game we were second in offense and tenth in defense, and we're generally an excellent rebounding team. But St. John's is one of the best offensive rebounding teams, so obviously that defense tonight.

And what we did on the back board was not sustainable. But we've got a bunch of NBA players -- we've got

NBA-level talent that's willing to screen and share and play for each other on offense. And it's a unique group of players that have NBA ability, but are humble and about team.

**Q. Dan, although it was a small sample size in the first half, Jaylin Stewart put together a good solid eight minutes of work, and I was wondering, could you speak upon what he did tonight for you and what we could possibly see in the future considering the long grind of March?**

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, he had a great night. He helped us big time the first half. With all of our young freshmen that are kind of playing on a high-level team, you hope they'll wait their turn, keep developing with us, and then become the stars of the program moving forward.

He's the type of player that freshman year to sophomore year will take an enormous jump, and he'll be playing at the level of these guys up here. So we just pleaded with him on a daily basis -- you know, that portal is calling and there's a lot of tampering going on. So hopefully our young players stay with us because we're going to lose a number of players from this team.

**Q. Cam, can you just describe the intensity of this game and the atmosphere, the energy. What did it feel like out there?**

CAM SPENCER: I mean, as a competitor these are the environments that you want to play in. It's a high-level basketball game, working towards something that we've worked for all year, and it's -- the Big East championship is something that we want to go get. Probably one of the highest, I guess, more intense games of this year, and rightfully so.

**Q. I just had a question for really the players here as well. This is going to be the first chance for the Big East championship you guys haven't won since 2011. What does it mean to you guys to possibly bring this back to Storrs?**

TRISTEN NEWTON: I mean UConn is a historic program, home of a lot of championships, and having the National Championship last year was great. But like Cam said, we've been struggling all year to win multiple championships, and this is one of the stops, and throughout the two years we've been making a lot of history. So I guess tomorrow after the game we'll try to make more history.

**Q. Just to follow up on that you mentioned at media day that the Marquette loss still eats at you. As you**

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**play for the championship tomorrow, what does it mean for the program?**

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, I think, listen, every time we take the court, we obsess over what we'll achieve next. Listen, the regular season champion, especially in a league which is true round robin like ours, the regular season champion is the Big East champion. Through the 20-game gauntlet, whoever wins that thing, true round robin, is the champion.

Obviously the Big East tournament champion is a chance to experience what it feels like in terms of confetti and cutting down nets and winning that third championship that we've strived for. We wanted the MTE, that championship. We wanted the regular season. We want -- obviously we got three ahead of us that we're trying to get, and tomorrow we're going to treat it like it's the Super Bowl.

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