

# Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 16, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

UConn Huskies

Coach Dan Hurley

Donovan Clingan

Tristen Newton

Postgame Media Conference



in conference regular season, then what we just did in the conference tournament, I think is the best that anyone's done through those three parts of the season.

We've been the best team in college basketball. Obviously March Madness next week, who knows what goes on there, but we've clearly been the best program in the country this year.

**Q. Tristen and Donovan, with about four minutes left, you had the no look dime down low to Donovan for the jam. Could you talk about the read in that moment because that felt like the dagger. And for Donovan, the head tap, you got the crowd in it all game long. Talk about the environment here?**

TRISTEN NEWTON: Coach drew up a great play putting the ball screen in. I saw no help because we had a shooter in the corner. So Donovan rolled hard and just gave me the ball down low. You see what he did today. So just getting the ball as much as we can down low, and he'll finish for us.

**Q. You guys put up 95 yesterday, obviously a tremendous offense (indiscernible). Where does that kind of versatility come from?**

DAN HURLEY: I just think when you look at our metrics, I don't know if we'll stay No. 1 on offense, but I know we woke up this morning and we were No. 1 in the country on offense. We fell a little bit defensively based on how well St. John's played and the mistakes that we made.

There's just not a lot of holes in the way that we play. We've got great offense, rebound the ball. We're an elite defensive team. We play so hard. Luke Murray and Kimani Young prepare this team for our opponents. We're deep, and we're deep with NBA players that are unselfish and about winning.

These guys have done this with a huge target this year, huge, huge target. We've gotten everyone's best game the entire year, and for what this group has done this year, it's been just a special, special season to this point.

UConn 73, Marquette 57

DAN HURLEY: It was a privilege, obviously as a player, a coach, just to be a part of this storied league. And to MSG, Big East Tournament, there's nothing like it. Conference tournament-wise, there's just no comparison anywhere to what this place is like.

Just to be a part of the history and tradition of some of the coaches and players that have won championships in this league is an awesome feeling.

It was a privilege to play Marquette. I say that a lot. But I think those are two championship programs on the court. I think we mirror each other in so many ways. I've just got so much respect for Shaka. I've got so much respect for their team and the way they go about their program. I don't hear them tampering with players in the portal.

It's a privilege to play against them. Classy program, championship program, and awesome, classy fans.

**Q. Dan, about the overall No. 1 seed for the tournament, does that interest you? Was it important to you? Would it be important to you? Is it a thing that you would like?**

DAN HURLEY: We've done a lot of historic things. This guy and the guy next to me have done some historic things in their two-year run with us. I know we've never gotten a No. 1 overall seed in program history, so this is a group that seems to be making history in a place that it's hard to make history.

I don't know. I think you've got to look at from the selection committee, what we did in the non-conference, what we did



**Q. Jaylin Stewart, the run that won you guys the game, can you talk about what he's brought lately and in the future?**

DAN HURLEY: I mean, the Big East and college basketball in general with the portal and COVID makes it tough on freshmen. Our league is especially tough on freshmen because the league is so physical. But we see on a daily basis what he displayed out there on the court.

He built on yesterday's performance. He came in with a lot of confidence. He's a guy that like a number of our freshmen, if they wait their turn, there's going to be some turnover from this year's team. But you're looking at if somebody doesn't tamper him out of our program. All that s--- is going on right now. It's crazy. He's a future star. You're looking at a future star at UConn.

**Q. Donovan, what does it mean to you to be able to perform like you did and accomplish what you did tonight being someone from Connecticut? I know you had a lot of family members in the crowd.**

DONOVAN CLINGAN: Yeah. I saw now the game was going the first couple minutes and realized that I had to attack the glass and rebound the ball best I can and finish around the rim. Today I finally made my free throws.

But to put the Connecticut jersey on and be able to represent the state of Connecticut means a lot to me. I've grown up in Connecticut my whole life. And watching UConn play, and to be able to be a part of history and be a part of something special like we've done last year and this year, it means a lot to me.

**Q. For the players, how did it feel to start the game? Were you nervous in the beginning at all?**

DONOVAN CLINGAN: I mean, I don't know about nervous. We talk about we can compete with any type of game that's going on out there, whether it's the fast game -- we just try to play the best defense possible and not let the up-and-down game happen. And we saw shots weren't falling, so we just gutted it out and kept doing what we were doing and really just talked about defense.

TRISTEN NEWTON: I don't feel like we were nervous. They were playing good defense and we were playing good defense. We weren't really nervous. It's just the shot wasn't falling and we got to the huddle and we knew -- Coach did a good job of telling us we were doing a great job on defense. They had two points and it was 2-0 for a long time.

I wouldn't say nervous or really worried throughout the game. We knew our offense would click and that's what happened and we ended up getting the win.

DAN HURLEY: I was lying. We were playing like s--- and we looked like two teams that were playing on three straight days.

**Q. Why do you think you guys have been able to have such a great year?**

DAN HURLEY: Just the culture, just the type of people that we're able to get and the way that we recruit them. Again, I mentioned it before, I think we'll start looking at what our roster looks like once our season is over.

We're not doing what a lot of other programs do in this time of year even while they're playing, through third parties, trying to pull people off other teams. I think we've got a real culture, and it starts with the way we recruit people, how honest we are about what we stand for.

We stand for how hard we work, how we're about winning, the personal development as men. We run an old-school program with a real culture, and you can see it by how unselfish this group is in a game on a night where we didn't shoot the ball that great, especially in the first half. Another 21-assist night on a team filled with NBA prospects speaks to just that we've got great people.

**Q. Tristen, about middle of the second half, you guys get into one of those bursts where you guys get your separation from them. You had a bunch of assists, maybe five points during it. Can you describe what it's like when you are in the middle of one of those runs, being a part of it?**

TRISTEN NEWTON: Yeah, it feels amazing. I've got great teammates around me. It's not like I'm looking for my -- they find me. I think with the three that you're talking about, I came off a stagger from Donovan, and I think it was Kam, he found me for the open three. It was great play calling, and it just feels amazing. Everybody runs and everybody can score. Just share the ball, and it'll be like that for a long time.

**Q. Donovan, you put up a stat line that hadn't been seen in the Big East Tournament since Patrick Ewing. How does that make you feel hearing Patrick Ewing's name next to your name. And then, Coach, speak to maybe even a surprise in his development that you might not have foreseen when you first recruited him to the point he's at now?**

DONOVAN CLINGAN: To have my name against

someone who played -- who's a legend really in basketball, in college basketball and even at the next level means a lot. But I try not to let that stuff really get to my head.

I'm just out here trying to help my team win any way possible, and tonight I realized I had to attack the glass as best I can. And I was just trying to be as strong as I can and finish the contact. And like I said, knocking down my free throws definitely helped me.

DAN HURLEY: This guy, last year he could have been -- he would have been a top-20 pick in last year's draft and accepted playing behind Adama and embraced that, and is just an incredible person. Most players in his situation in the college game today, the agent would have been calling, the dad would have been calling, he would have been boycotting practice and being pissy. But he's a great, great guy.

Obviously he's going to be a lottery pick coming up here in the very near future, but he never makes it about himself. He's just about team. He's got incredible personality. I've said this, this guy next to me somehow finds himself still being an underrated player, which is incredible, because he's going to be a 12- to 15-year NBA player.

But this guy right here, Donovan, he's one of the two or three most impactful players in college basketball. If your eyes don't -- if you don't see that with your eyes, then look at the analytics.

**Q. At the second TV time-out of the second half, you had taken Donovan out for a rest, and then all of a sudden you guys went on a huge run. Donovan was dominating the game. Obviously you've got to give him a rest at some point, but what were your thoughts on how the run happened with Donovan on the bench, and were you surprised?**

DAN HURLEY: Well, Donovan played 30 tonight. He had played heavy minutes. I think what Sam said, he just gives you that different look, a little bit more aggressive in ball screen defense, which allowed us to maybe stop Kameron Jones from getting downhill a little bit more, backing the dribbler up.

But it was one of those things, it was Game 3, third day, two champs. We're both championship programs. They played with a level of desperation and urgency.

But we eventually were able to find a rhythm, and we get the separation. I think that's what makes the team special. Most teams in our situation, Cam has four, Steph has six, Alex has six, but most of them came late. Most teams lose on nights like that where three of your best players don't

have good offensive games. That's what makes this team special.

**Q. Donovan, I thought you were every bit as dominant your first trip to Marquette. As a backup you had 20 and 10. The fans were cheering for Sanogo to get back in the game. Was this a good matchup for you?**

DONOVAN CLINGAN: I asked myself the same question. I don't know why I'm so dominant against this team. But maybe it's a good matchup for me, and I'm able to just -- I don't know. It's hard to say.

But like I said, I'm just here just trying to impact the game in any way I can, play the best defense I can, and just trying to help my team win.

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