

# Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 13, 2025

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

**Xavier Musketeers**

**Coach Sean Miller**

**Ryan Conwell**

Postgame Media Conference



as we did was our defense. In the second half in particular. Marquette broke us down, but we have to be better -- had to be better to win that game. You know, it's heart-breaking when you lose a game 89-87.

So I credit Marquette, and very, very proud of our team, our players. Incredibly proud of Ryan. He didn't play as well in the first two matchups against Marquette. I don't know if anybody can play better in a conference tournament game than he just played here today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. You were 1 for 13 from three against Marquette the first two games and tonight, obviously setting Xavier a Big East tournament record. What worked for you today? What did you attack differently compared to the first two matchups?**

RYAN CONWELL: First and foremost, I want to give all glory to God. He's the reason I'm here today.

Just really, you know, just leaning on my coaches and my teammates and what they were telling me, you know, through film and what they were trying to coach me from the first two games and me just trusting in my work and listening to them and allowing that to translate to this game.

I think I just came in with the right head space and just tried to get the job done, so...

**Q. I know you guys scored a lot of points, but in that second half, Marquette's defense really seemed to toughen up during that stretch. Zach didn't seem to get the ball down low most of the game. Was that by design, or was that a function of Marquette's defense?**

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, no, they're good. They were double-team and trapping him. So a couple of opportunities that he got, he became a passer. You look at it. Zach had 15. What Zach will tell you he was disappointed he missed the dunk. Still, it's not like he had eight. 15, 17 points. 7 rebounds. That's pretty much what

Marquette 89, Xavier 87

THE MODERATOR: Coach Sean Miller, Ryan Conwell.

SEAN MILLER: Obviously a heck of a basketball game. Credit Marquette. I thought that the way they came out after halftime, the pace they played at, you know, their fight, their will, especially being down ten at the half was really impressive.

For whatever reason on our end, the first eight to ten minutes of the second half we had a hard time getting our defense set. As we were getting our defense set and not doing it well, we injected a ton of confidence into their team because they just -- even some of the threes they missed, they created good three-point shots. Obviously, look, March Madness players and guys have to make shots. Credit Marquette. I thought the timely plays in the game favored them, but it was that segment -- the first ten minutes of the second half -- that really set a bad tone for our defense.

I mean, I look at our offense in this game and understand how good of a defensive team Marquette is. We were 30 for 57 from the field, 53%. We were 11 for 23 from three. We were 16 of 19 from the line, and we had ten turnovers. We scored 87 points. It's hard to lose in March with the numbers that I just gave you.

The guy to my right, I think he is one of America's best guards. He proved it today. Ryan has done nothing but get better and better and better. Coming into today's game, he had scored 20 or more points four consecutive games, and he carried us. He had 38. Some of those team stats I just read were a function of him just rising to another level.

But our defense, man, a big reason we finished as strong



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Zach averages. He played his game. Really did.

Marquette in the stretch you're referring to, look, again, we were 30 for 57 from the field, and we had only ten turnovers. We scored 87 points, but they hit a stretch where they turned us over, and we had three turnovers at the half. Something we talked a lot about at halftime. We did have seven in the second half, but of those seven turnovers, if you look at them closely, they turned those turnovers into points.

Some of it was to their credit. Some of it was on our end. We have to be responsible. Can't cough the ball up. But when you play Marquette, you have to do two things: You have to keep them off the offensive glass, and you have to be able to protect the ball. If you would have told me that they would get four second shots and we would have ten turnovers for the game, I would have taken that.

What did us in is they were 14 for 33 from the three-point line, and in the second half they were 9 for 18. Their three-point shooting, especially in that period of time that I was referring to, first eight to ten minutes of the second half, it really did us in. A lot of that was us.

**Q. I know you're just a couple of minutes after a real tough loss here, but just big-picture-wise, a lot of projections had you right on the bubble for the NCAA Tournament coming into this tournament. Just how are you feeling going into Selection Sunday? I know you won seven straight coming into this. What do you feel like your credentials are coming for a bid?**

SEAN MILLER: I'm only going to talk about our team. I appreciate you asking the question. We desperately want to be a part of the tournament.

We've won 12 of our last 16, seven in a row coming into today's game. Obviously we played against an excellent team on a neutral court. I think if anybody watches today's game, I think you had two teams that are NCAA Tournament caliber playing out there earlier.

The 13 Big East wins, the 21 overall wins, and then what I really try to look at is just our level of play. We're one of America's best three-point shooting teams. We're one of America's best free-throw shooting teams. Defensively we finish third in the Big East in terms of defensive efficiency. The quality of play that we've had for a long period of time, you know, to me that's what we stand on.

Look, I know there's a lot of teams that are worthy, and this conference, this team, people say good things about you. Other people don't say good things about you. It makes you mad. You want to reach in the TV. We're going to rely

on the expertise of the committee and the work we've put. We're hopeful that we can be a part of the tournament.

I know this, that over the last six to eight weeks there aren't too many teams in the country that have played at a higher level than our group. Today we played at a very high level. Our defense left us at a really inopportune period of time, and Marquette made us pay.

**Q. With the idea of being in the tournament coming up in the NCAA Tournament, Coach, what do you think with a game with eight lead changes, as tight as you played this team, three games, how does this prepare you for getting into the tournament and your next game?**

SEAN MILLER: Look, playing in the Big East Tournament is the NCAA Tournament. It feels the same. I mean, the crowd, the pageantry. If you lose, it's over. I mean, he's not happy. I'm not happy.

You play your heart and soul. Our guys in our locker room are devastated. First and foremost, they're devastated because we wanted to play on that coveted Friday night in the Garden against St. John's when there's only four teams left. We wanted to be that team. Marquette is that team now. So, yeah, it's tough, but you learn from circumstances.

Again, I want to tip my hat to Ryan. He just came off a game where, I mean, he had 38. If you can get 38 on Marquette in Madison Square Garden with the stakes this high, I think, again, it says a lot about who he is as a player. I believe this. I think he's one of college basketball's best guards.

**Q. Ryan, for you this is a situation that's extremely similar to one that you personally were in last year. I guess, what did you learn from so much uncertainty heading into Selection Sunday, and how much can you help the other guys on this team?**

RYAN CONWELL: Really just that the little things matter. When comes down to it, the close games, just pay attention to the little things like offensive rebounds, defensive rebounds, taking care of the ball. You know, just the little things. I think that's what I've learned from last year.

**Q. Coach, two things that jump out here are the points off of turnovers, 18-2, and also, you had the lead in this game for 31 minutes. They only had it for nine. You know, you mentioned the relentless pressure. I was sitting here when you played St. John's. You said the exact same words, that their relentless pressure broke**

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**you down. Is that why you lost this game?**

SEAN MILLER: You know, we're in the Garden. I'm at the same podium. We had the same locker room. The two games you are referring to are almost identical, really. You know, playing St. John's and playing Marquette.

I don't think in any way that's a negative towards the team that I'm coaching or us. Part of what makes Marquette the team that they are is we only had ten turnovers, and they turned those ten turnovers into 18 points. When you play St. John's and you play Marquette, they have some common threads. It's their relentless pressure, and you have to be able to play through it and handle it.

You also have to be able to do it for 40 minutes. I think there's a lot of teams and ball handlers and just offenses that can be with it for a while, but you've got to be able to stay with it.

One thing that I'm really proud of at our group, when the game really turned maybe in and around the 5:00, 8:00 mark when they really did take the lead, we fought back and took the lead again. We did not go away. It's just if you look at the timely plays, a couple of threes that they had, that they knocked down, we had the ball a couple of times, and we weren't able to, in fact, make the positive play that they made.

So it was very similar in terms of how that game went to this one, but I think in both games we could have won the Game 2 or three times over.

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