

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 15, 2025

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

UConn Huskies

Coach Dan Hurley

Hassan Diarra

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton 71, UConn 62

THE MODERATOR: Hassan Diarra and Coach Dan Hurley.

DAN HURLEY: For us I think the two teams that are deserving to play for the championship are going to play. We were the third-best team, I guess, in the regular season. Third-best team doesn't deserve to play for a championship.

Obviously that first half defensive performance was, you know, not worthy of -- not worthy of having a chance to play on Saturday night at MSG against a team like St. John's this year. We got exactly what we deserved.

Credit Greene. You're going to lose if a five-point-a-game scorer is at 17 at halftime. Obviously let Neal get going early. But we got what we deserved and we deserve to be going home.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Obviously 75% in the first half, like you said, defense has been an issue all year. What can you do over the next week to kind of clean that up or just improve in that department?

DAN HURLEY: I mean, it's hard to fix your defense at this point of the year, and there were so many just one-on-one battles lost. I mean, just an inability to guard the ball. Just the way that Neal started the game, just scoring one-on-one in a variety of fashions, and we were just so weak guarding the ball.

They were shooting shots in the restricted -- you know, without much -- we've had an inability to guard the ball the whole year. Part of it's strength. Obviously this team

doesn't have the physicality in the Big East to be able to win a lot of those one-on-one matchups.

Q. It looked like the game was going similar to yesterday. Like you were behind first half, started to come back. How was it different from yesterday against Villanova, the second half for you?

HASSAN DIARRA: I would say we made a push. We got our defenses right. They were showing 27% at one point. We just strung together some stops, and we were able to get out in transition and get some easy baskets.

Q. Hassan, I have to ask about what happened at the end there with Jamiya. What was going through your head at the moment?

HASSAN DIARRA: I mean, they were already up with 7 seconds left. He didn't want to dribble the ball out. Went in for a fancy dunk. I just felt it was disrespectful to the game of basketball.

Q. Dan, two years ago you lost in this round, and you kind of flushed it and made obviously -- in the long run you triumphed. Can you do that? Do you feel like you can do that again? Do you have that same feeling, or does this somehow feel different because of the way this one played out?

DAN HURLEY: Listen, we have obviously not performed like that team. That team had just a tough couple of weeks in January. Then we played a Marquette team with Ighodaro and Prosper and Kam Jones and Kolek. I mean, that's a team that we lost to in the semis that year.

I do think, though, that our team, we're not a very physical team. I think that the way that Big East games get officiated both regular season and in the Big East tournament are officiated way differently than games will be officiated in the NCAA Tournament. If you don't call holding and off ball, if you don't allow people to move around, referees will not advance to the next round of the tournament if they don't call fouls.

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So it is less physical, especially in the early rounds of the tournament. They tend to let you play a little bit more as it goes on. So I think the way that we play offense with the movement is more conducive to the NCAA Tournament, so I do think we're going to take the same approach.

I made that mistake a couple of years back in '22 by letting it linger. I'm not going to let it linger. We got what we deserved. We're not championship quality. We didn't deserve to win anything in the Big East this year.

Q. This is for Hass. Jamiya did apologize before you came in. He said he regretted what he did, just so you know if that didn't filter its way back to you. For you and your teammates, you will have six or seven days off before you play again. How will you rally specifically in your fraternity with the players and what's your focus on moving forward over the next six, seven days within that locker room?

HASSAN DIARRA: Like Coach said, we're going to flush it out, break down the film, watch our mistakes and come together and try to fix them. We're going to be ready for the NCAA Tournament.

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