

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 4, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Georgetown Hoyas Coach James Howard Milan Bolden-Morris

Postgame Media Conference



Georgetown - 68, Providence - 55

THE MODERATOR: We welcome in Georgetown head coach James Howard and Milan Bolden-Morris.

COACH HOWARD: Well, thank you for coming out. I thought our team came out tonight, and they played for each other. And you could see that on the floor. They were really clicking.

And that's, I think, what each and every coach try to practice for. It's for the beginning of, at the end of the year, to be able to be one. And we have a thing we talk about, we are one. And I thought that's what we came with tonight.

Q. Milan, I heard you out there keeping your team in coverage. What was your mindset in this game to get the W?

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: It was to play for each other we talk about sell out each time. That's what coach Sugar Rodgers always tells us -- play for each other, play as hard as you can, play your minutes hard. Let the next man up step up and play.

And my role as a leader on this team is to always bring that energy, bring that juice. And I live by the quote, "if you're juiceful you're useful; if your juiceless you're useless."

That's my job. I've always tried to keep communicating, keep talking, be the hot man in the group. I'm the loudest in practice, I'm the loudest here. I don't think that's going to change much.

Q. Can you describe what changed there in the middle of the second quarter, a 33-2 run over those -- into the third quarter? What did you guys see differently, what

did you do differently?

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: We just saw opportunities with the trap. And they were working. And one of the things that we did in the previous games was let up a little bit. So we just tried to stay aggressive. And we saw there could also be traps over half court. So we tried to do that and just stay together.

One thing we kept saying in the huddle is we're playing so that our people that don't get to play all the time play. So we were really selfless in that and we tried to keep that pursuit.

Providence did a great job at the end being relentless. But that was our mindset going in, let everybody touch the court.

Q. You mentioned that run that Providence went on to cut the lead. I think they got it down as low as eight points, I believe. And Emily Archibald, felt like she was making shots that quite frankly defied the laws of physics. What was the overall message Coach Howard was relaying and just together figuring out how to come away with this with a win and pull away?

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: Coach Howard just kept preaching don't be selfish. When we were going into the game, don't let up. And every moment we did let up it was, like, keep going at them again. Like, make sure everyone tries to touch the court.

So when Providence did go on that run our job was to stay locked in, stay focused on our game plan and find the shooter, because she was shooting the crap out of the ball.

COACH HOWARD: I think Milan said it best. You're going to -- it's going to be a game of runs. And we made our run in the third quarter. And in the fourth quarter they made a run at us.

Sometimes you can have teams that go the opposite way. And adversity hits. How do you handle adversity? And we stood right back up. We got the big play. Graceann hits



the big shot. (Indiscernible) run a five baseline action and she gets it, knocks down a 3 out of the left corner. And it was a timely 3 that continued to give us that lead.

And then a big freshman, Bri Scott, gets the backside layup on the back end. That's the things like that that really kept them at bay and kept us in the lead. And I think we took a little bit out of them after we made the last run.

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: I think one of our early struggles in the season is we would give up towards the end. When they would go on runs we would get deflated. I think what we've done a really good job of like the second half is really, like, when we get punched in the mouth we punch back. That's something that we've been preaching a lot more lately especially introducing a lot more pressure.

And so I think with that, like, we're always punching back now that we're applying pressure.

Q. First of all, you come here in crutches and a boot. Did you come into the game before that, or is that new for this game?

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: I have a pinched nerve in my foot. It happened -- I really don't know when. It was probably right after Christmas break. We had a bad COVID run and coming back trying to go super hard. Something happened. But I just persevered, just dug it. That's what I go by.

Q. You've been dealing with this for a while?

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: Yes.

Q. Second question, now you get UConn. And they trounced you recently. How do you approach that game?

MILAN BOLDEN-MORRIS: One thing that Coach Sugar always says, I'm going to quote her a lot because she's always pumping us up, but if you're not ready to play and you're going to play soft, stay in the locker room.

That's our mentality. We're not soft. Just because we got knocked we're coming back, punch them right in the mouth.

And we've got a lot of fighters on this team. Sometimes it doesn't show but we're definitely ready. We only got to play them once. This is our second opportunity. So we're going to make the most of it and we're going to make it happen.

Q. Kelsey went down there late. Looked like a twisted

ankle or sprained ankle or something. Can you update us? Is she going to be ready for tomorrow. It's a quick turnaround. How is she?

COACH HOWARD: Too early, don't know right now. I know she's being treated. So still waiting to see what we get back from the doctors.

Q. And if you could address, obviously, UConn now has everybody back, and they did, February 20th wasn't that long ago, and they did a good job. What can be different tomorrow?

COACH HOWARD: Well, one thing I see going into that game, if we're going to have any chance whatsoever we have to take care of the ball. We turned the ball over and gave them a lot of stuff in transition.

They scored 39 points off our turnovers and I know that they trap a lot of stuff off of screens and they try to blow you up off of handoffs. And they're very aggressive.

Number one, we've got to take care of the ball. Number two, we are going to have to try to pack it in defensively and force them to play outside and then rebound.

We're playing UConn that's getting ready for the tournament. This is by far, they're back healthy, they're back, and their mindset is to try to go at everyone and be that Final Four team.

What we have to do is a great atmosphere for us. These kids won't get that opportunity again to be in a Final Four atmosphere. Tomorrow I know it's going to be about 10,000 people here supporting them.

For a young team like us it's the best time to be able to come out and be able to see what you have. Let's go play. We're not going to put any pressure on them. We're going to go out there and play.

We're going to see what it looks like. If Kelsey is there, we're going. If Kelsey is not there we're going. I think Milan said it best: We believe, you fight. You just go out there and fight. And whatever the outcome we'll be proud of them. But I look forward to the game tomorrow and I think they do too.

Q. Milan spoke to it a little bit, just that perseverance keeping things together at the end of the season. How do you as a head coach throughout the season cope with disruption, a losing streak, keep your team in the right head space, go on a winning streak at the end of the season and stay motivated?



COACH HOWARD: That's a big question. It's been hard. It's been really hard. Whenever you go through and you hit non-conference, and then just the way the schedule came out, we were done December the 13th. We didn't play again almost January the 13th, 15th.

And we lose a lot of chemistry and you only have four kids in practice and you can only do back to the individuals again to the first day COVID came out. And all your chemistry is gone.

I started everyone pretty much on my team at one point in the season other than the walk-on. And those freshmen weren't ready for the Big East. I had to throw them out there against the Marquettes and the DePauls. And we're coming right out of the gate in January when we were off and didn't play for almost a month.

DC is different. DC is 10 days plus five. That's half a month. You try to find chemistry until the Seton Hall game at Seton Hall. We were able to get everybody back but they were on limited minutes. So still no chemistry there.

As we started to get everything turning again we were proud of their commitment. We were proud of their effort that they were giving. They really fought in a lot of games against some of the better teams.

That's what we're seeing down the stretch. If you think about it, yes, UConn, they're in another bracket of their own when it comes to points. But we're proud of that 15-point win at Xavier. We're proud of that 21-point win at Butler.

We're proud of this win again tonight because it shows that if everything's clicking, and I still think that we left a lot on the floor. I didn't think Mary Clougherty was in her rare form of knocking down the open looks she got. I thought we left some free throws on the floor again. There was some looks there, some early layups to start the game.

That's when you're clicking. So that's 68 points should have easily been about 80-something. That's what we've been going through. We need everything and everyone to be able to finish those little things, those little plays. I thought it brought us together.

Q. Are you a different team than you were even ten days ago when you went to Connecticut? And was there an impetus that changed, something spark you, something happened even in a practice or somewhere that has caused this?

COACH HOWARD: I think the UConn game -- it started before UConn, really, because the four games before

UConn, when we played Marquette and was right there when we were up at the half against -- Villanova was playing well. When we were there with Creighton. And when we lost that double overtime game against DePaul, 105-104, I think they were starting to know that they could compete with the best in the conference.

And then we ran into the beast. And it kind of brings you back to reality a little bit. But I think UConn and their crowd, they got to really see what that real length was about. They got to see what it was like in having 10,000 people on top of you cheering, and the atmosphere.

And I think they took note to that. In order to be in the same conversation you gotta play every minute. And from that game, we took another run, and they took another step in the right direction, as I believe.

And Milan said it best, we just had a lot of grief and a lot of bad stuff happening. And after this win tonight, I don't know if you guys was watching, Graceann Bennett just broke down into my arms right after, because she's the young lady whose mom passed and passed in her sleep. And had no health problems. And you're dealing with all of this as a coach, as a team. And one thing we are, we are one.

And our players rallied behind her. Our staff rallied behind her. Our administration rallied behind her, because you can never get that back. Every minute she's going to feel it. And that's what that was tonight.

She had angels over her because she played well. She shot that 3 tonight like 2-for-3 from the 3. That was Graceann. It was her mom blessing her, knowing, hey, I'm here with you. That's how I believe. I'm a very spiritual guy. I believe in a higher being and stuff like that. But I'm just proud of those young women.

Q. How do you prepare and scout for a player like Azzi Fudd?

COACH HOWARD: Well, we know Azzi very well because Azzi's mom played for me when I was at Georgetown a long, long time ago. Katie played for me when she transferred in from NC State. And Azzi had been to camps and stuff like that, been watching Azzi all her life.

You don't, to be honest with you. You don't. You don't. Paige Bueckers, Azzi Fudd, you've got to go out there and you've got to keep, for us, we've got to keep everything in front. We've got to take away penetration lanes.

If you concentrate on Azzi, someone else is going to get it. You've just got to make sure you're there on the catch and

that you're at least contesting shots before they get them up and then you're going to have to rebound the backside if the shot comes off.

So that's how we look at it. Azzi shoots, have great touch on her shot. We watched that mid-range shot. She elevates on it. And it's going to be good for her because her and Brianna Scott played AAU together. So it's going to be good. It's going to be good for all of them to get that look out there on the court. And we'll see. We'll see if we can dial up something that we had last year when we played at Georgetown and we held them to 28 in the first half.

Who knows. We'll see.

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