

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 4, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Xavier Musketeers

Coach Melanie Moore

Postgame Media Conference



St. John's - 76, Xavier - 69

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Melanie Moore from Xavier.

COACH MOORE: Wow. I'm just so proud of our entire team and staff and our one senior, Ayanna Townsend, and just their effort and energy. That was a hard-fought game. We were in it to the very end. And those kids in that locker room gave everything they had.

And unfortunately that's the hard part with sports is you have a winner, and unfortunately you have a loser. That was a tough locker room to go back into. That was probably the best basketball that we played all season. And just the adversity we went through, those kids believed today that they were going to win.

Q. I wanted to know, what was the mindset going into this game compared to the last two games? And the fact it was a close game you lost the last two to double digits?

COACH MOORE: Good question. We gathered in a circle yesterday at the hotel and we talked about how it's March. It's March Madness. And we went around the circle. And I asked them: How many of you played in March and cut the nets down?

And a really cool thing is eight out of our 10 players that traveled with us cut down nets. And so each one of those ladies talked about a word that would describe that team when they cut down the nets.

And it was incredible. Shai said they had a three percent chance of winning when she won her championship. Ayanna said they battled injuries. Another player said seniors fouled out, freshmen got subbed in and they won it with three overtimes with those freshmen.

Everybody had a message. Some were talking about positivity. And it was very powerful. And that's what those kids played off of, is this is March. It's 0-0. It's anybody's ball game. And they were inspired. They inspired all of us, and hopefully they inspired all of you today with how hard they played.

Q. Compared to the last time you saw them, which was about a month ago, they put up 58 points on you in the first half. And they played a very high-paced game. When we talked in the preseason your big objective was to speed up the offense play at a higher pace, and you did today. Compared to the two previous meetings, what adjustments were made compared to those games where you were able to play at that pace and play it at a pretty good level?

COACH MOORE: We knew -- the biggest thing was contesting their 3-point shots. In both games, they got a lot of made 3s. So we adjusted on our shot selection. We knew we wanted to battle with them in the paint. And those outside shots, take them later in the shot clock and not so quick, because St. John's is so aggressive in transition. So we knew we had to take care of the ball, which we did tonight, and we didn't want the quick shots unless it was layups. And I thought our kids bought into that.

And on the defensive end, being there on the catch. And we adjusted. We switched all screens the first two times where we stayed home with certain players on certain players. And I thought that was a major adjustment, and our kids locked in and were bought in to stopping their man and who they were guarding. And they did a great job doing that.

Q. You held Correa their best scorer, I think, well below her average, at least made it hard for her. But their interior folks kind of ruled the second half. What was going on there?

COACH MOORE: We talked about that at halftime, be ready for Leilani and Peebles to take over in the third quarter. And so that was something that we told



Townsend. It's senior to senior. You've got to lock up and try to defend, and they went at her.

And I thought when Ayanna picked up foul troubles that got us a little bit. And Correa, that's why she's all conference. She's one of the best players not only in our conference but in the country.

And so I thought Scarlett did a great job with that challenge of locking her up and then Calhoun. We tried to put fresh bodies on her. But you can only hold all-conference players down so long and they're going to get them.

And I thought she had some big buckets in the second half that kind of started their run and ignited it. But I'm still proud of our kids effort we're young, as I said in that locker room. I said only Townsend is not here next year. This was by far the best game of the season. This needs to be momentum moving into next year.

And every single player was, like, was on board. So just looking forward to getting back in the gym with this group in a couple of weeks and starting for next season.

Q. You mentioned such a young team and looking to build off that momentum. What did you learn this season from those young players, specifically, and their growth up until this point?

COACH MOORE: Resiliency. Like I said, we had a lot of injuries -- this player's in, this person's out -- illnesses, just all different things. Some players that are no longer with us. And I thought our kids stayed the course.

They believed in each other. They believed in our coaching staff, and we just kept getting better and kept coming every day to work. And that's something that we can take from this season moving on to next.

Q. Just your thoughts on Beeler battling today with points and assists and just coming back off injury and her performance.

COACH MOORE: Beeler, the last two games, is showing everybody what she can do. And it took her this long to get to that point. She's a fighter. And when she went down I was, like, uh-ho. And for her to be like, I'm good, I'm coming, I'm playing back in this game.

And then she came and still made plays in that second half with her knee. So that's a credit to who she is. She's a fighter. She's a winner. If you look at our games all season, when she plays well, we're in the mix to go for the win.

So she's a huge piece of what we're building and we've got to continue to get good pieces around her. But she's a special player and a special kid.

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