

# Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 4, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

**St. John's Red Storm**

**Coach Joe Tartamella**

**Rayven Peeples**

Postgame Media Conference



St. John's - 76, Xavier - 69

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by coach Joe Tartamella and Rayven Peeples from St. John's.

COACH TARTAMELLA: Pleased with the way we finished the game. Probably for the first three quarters we just really didn't have it. But I thought our energy and our commitment to defending and guarding the ball and getting 50/50 balls changed in the fourth quarter. And we needed it to, obviously, throughout the game.

So, to be able to finish in the fourth with a 25-12 disparity and win the game going away. The way we shot the ball from the free-throw line I thought was terrific through the end of the game.

And I'll say this, because I didn't say it in the locker room and I should have, but Ray played probably the best quarter of her career here and made probably the biggest plays of her career here, since she's gotten here, in the fourth quarter. So I'm really happy for her.

But really I thought we grinded it. Our year has been frustrating at times in the way that some of these games have gone for us. And to be able to finish in this moment -- I said this coming off the court -- when you're in the conference tournament and you can play the way we did to finish the game is a testament to these guys and their mentality because they could have easily let this game go. So we'll get ready for tomorrow.

**Q. Rayven, you were really efficient throughout this game. When they got you the ball you did something with it. What was your mentality coming in and during the game?**

RAYVEN PEEPLES: I just kept the mentality of finishing

everything throughout the game because my teammates were finding me and throwing great passes and having confidence in me to finish. So I just took that confidence and tried to finish every layup I took.

**Q. Obviously Leilani, first-team all-conference, she didn't have her best stuff tonight. So how important was it for you as a senior also to step up in that spot? And also, as a follow-up, what's it like having a point guard like Camree Clegg, finding you open to get you the buckets you got?**

RAYVEN PEEPLES: It's great having a point guard like Cam because she's always taking what the defense gives her and always finding the best options for all of our teammates.

I think even though Leilani did play not her best, all of our team helped pick her up and just kept fighting throughout the whole game so we could win.

**Q. You were very efficient in the fourth quarter. How would you take this win and get ready for next game?**

RAYVEN PEEPLES: I think we just have to play tomorrow with the mentality we had during the fourth quarter. We were all locked in together as a team. And we were focused on defense. And also trying to be smart and make the right decisions.

**Q. You said you didn't like the first three quarters all that much. Tell us what the problem was. It wasn't like you played lousy. But you just didn't play great.**

COACH TARTAMELLA: Yeah, the problem was probably something I could describe for about a week. But we just -- when you watch our team play and you watch any team play, I didn't think we took control of the game. And what I mean by that is we didn't dictate anything defensively that I thought we should have against their team.

We didn't guard the ball. We weren't executing our game plan. We were struggling to score. We weren't rebounding. We didn't get on the offensive glass. And so



as a team it was harder for us to score because we weren't getting stops.

So it's hard to get out get in transition and play with the pace we want to play if we're not getting stops. And I think that was hard. So our energy level seemed to -- which it hasn't through the year -- but it seemed to correlate to us scoring. So we didn't have enough energy level on defense.

So we had a pretty candid talk at halftime. And really in the fourth quarter, and I'll say this, there was a point in the fourth where one of our players led our huddle and I think probably changed the momentum of the game.

And so when you've got players like that who can lead in those moments, like Emma Nolan did today, it was special to watch. And so all of those things changed. We may have made an adjustment defensively that worked out for us, which I think was important and gave us some juice. However, we can't play that way again and expect to be in the game.

But we found a way. And for these kids to do that at this moment in time, in a conference tournament, with the kind of pressure you have on you, and to go to the line and step up and knock down free throw after free throw, it makes you feel good as a coach through all the stuff you've been through all year to see them be able to do that.

**Q. You were down by as many as eight in that fourth quarter. It was 59-51. So my question for you is, what does it mean for a player like Danielle Patterson to hit a 3 to give you the lead for good and ride that out to a seven-point victory?**

COACH TARTAMELLA: We felt if we could get the lead we would be able blow the doors open and be in control a little bit. Danielle Patterson, throughout the game, probably was like everybody else. And so I told her, I just have to make her mad and she seems to make corner 3s, so I'm just going to keep making her mad.

That's basically -- she's been in these moments in her career, in high school and even at the collegiate level at other places, but she has a high level of confidence.

I thought she really flipped the switch for us, and that's the second time in a game here recently that she's done that. And so when we can couple that with being on the glass and being able to be a great defender that's what people have seen her in her career.

A big-time shot in a big moment and one that I was excited about. And then I had to yell at her to get back on defense

because she was yelling at the bench.

**Q. You gave such high praise to Rayven for her quarter and how she did so well. What stood out to you the most offensively about her game?**

COACH TARTAMELLA: She had conviction today. She caught the ball and scored. There was no hesitation in what she was doing. She knew exactly where she was. She knew exactly what she wanted to do to get the and-one. And then the O board was massive.

And I think when you've got -- we know that's what she can be. And this kid has had -- her first practice of the year, we get shut down for a couple of weeks. And she was one of them.

Comes back, second game of the year gets hurt, misses two months. To see where she was today, and, again, in this moment is going to really bode well for her obviously in the future with us.

But you can't say enough about what she did because we needed someone and we needed something to spark what we were going to do. And she made the plays. And that's my thing with her. Just have conviction and play with confidence, and you're a pretty good player.

**Q. Are you at liberty to share what was spoken by your athlete in the huddle that maybe turned the momentum around for you guys?**

COACH TARTAMELLA: Actually, I'm not, because I don't know what she said. So there you go. Pretty good answer.

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