

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 5, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Seton Hall Pirates

Coach Anthony Bozzella

Sidney Cooks

Mya Bembry

Postgame Media Conference



Seton Hall - 66, Creighton - 65

THE MODERATOR: Opening statement from Anthony Bozzella.

COACH BOZZELLA: Congratulations to Creighton. We have a tremendous amount of respect for them and their program. They have great players and coaches. And they will do really well in the NCAA Tournament.

For us it's obviously a tremendous win. We've really come a long way. To lose to them a few weeks ago in double overtime gave us actually a lot more confidence. And obviously we were on a good streak of winning.

But for us when we were 3-7 we said we're going to do things day-by-day, and to these girls' credit we have. We could never be here without, obviously, all their teammates but these two young ladies have really stepped up in a lot of ways, both as players but even as people, leading in their own way.

Really proud of all our players and our coaches. They did a great job. But these two young ladies to the left of me have really epitomized what we're trying to do here at Seton Hall, which is be great teammates, great players and most of all great student-athletes.

Q. Mya, on this team you're probably seen as not one of the top three people they're looking to guard. But you were incredibly efficient today. And of course the last one was the big one. How do you approach a game like this knowing that you're not one of the primary aims of either your team or theirs?

MYA BEMBRY: On this team, we all have a role. And I

know my role is to hustle and get rebounds and defend the best player on that game. So this wasn't anything out of the ordinary in practice. I try to do my best and give my teammates the ball, and when I have a shot I'll shoot it. This was no different in the game; we practice this all the time. I was ready for the moment.

Q. Mya, you talk about the mental preparation for taking that kind of big shot, but to actually be there in the moment, obviously is one of those athlete moments where you kind of just black out and the moment just happens. But at the same time you also dream of this your whole life in your driveway practicing that shot. But try to describe, anyone that has never had that feeling of being the one taking that shot and then actually doing it and making good on it to give your team ultimately the win.

MYA BEMBRY: You just gotta prepare mentally for it the whole season. It's nothing different than what we had practiced. It's a little different now because there's a lot of space behind the backboard and your teammates are standing behind you hoping the shot goes in. You kind of black out and you see the rim and everything. And you just hope it's money.

Q. Sidney, you scored a game-high 20 points. Could you talk about the importance of establishing your post presence and your interior presence in the paint tonight?

SIDNEY COOKS: I think very early in the season I settled a lot and I kind of underestimated my strength. So after working with the coaches and they're telling me you're strong, get down there and battle. You've got it, don't settle, I've really focused on that.

And I've realized, wow, you guys are right. It is easier down here. So I just really have been focusing on it. It's part of my pregame warmups just to kind of score around the basket. And I've always been tossed inside and then work outside. It's really been working for me.

Q. Sidney, you guys got down a little bit by seven in



the fourth quarter. And then there was the chippiness going on. Could you talk about the composure of your team and staying resilient through, I think there were 12 lead changes in the game, how you handled it?

SIDNEY COOKS: Those are my sisters. I mean, we've got each other's back at all times. So, yeah, it got a little chippy, but we were focused on us. We wanted to win this game so bad. We wanted to advance. And we were looking at the bigger picture. Like, okay, we're down seven but we're good.

Coach B, he's put so much confidence in all of us. Even the players that might not have gotten in, they were talking to us as well, like, you guys got this. We're going to win this game. If you have that mentality, no matter what the score said we were ready. We came out and that's why that shot is easy for her.

She makes that all the time with her eyes closed. So we knew it was money every time. We just have that confidence in one another and the coaches have that in us as well. So it makes it easier.

Q. Sidney and then Mya, tomorrow, looking ahead, I know you just wrapped up this game but everyone has momentum going into the semifinals. How will you approach Villanova and specifically Maddy, who has been stellar, as we go down the stretch here?

SIDNEY COOKS: We have a lot of respect for Maddy. You know we want to play everyone the same. We're not going to change up who we are. I think when we make it our pace, it's hard for any team to be with us.

So I think that's what we'll really focus on -- try to get some good sleep tonight, since it's 12.00 a.m. and be ready to go. We're not going to change anything about ourselves. Just being a little stronger and stretch these legs out and get some ibuprofen. We'll be fine.

MYA BEMBRY: Piggybacking off what Sid said, just play our game. We know each other. We trust each other and we've prepared for this game since the beginning of the season. So we're ready.

Q. You set the tone early. You came out at a fast pace. Was that your game plan going into the start of the game?

COACH BOZZELLA: We wanted to make sure that we were aggressive, because we know how good Creighton is and how aggressive they can be. And if we started on our heels, we knew we were going to have to climb uphill all day.

So even though they eventually took the lead, us having the lead at some point allowed us to have confidence, but also not feel like we were chasing all game. So that was really, yes, we wanted to start out aggressively and get a lead early. That was important to us.

Q. Take me through the strategy of that last play there?

COACH BOZZELLA: That's a great question and we debated it for a while. I'm one of those person who likes to shoot early so we can extend the game. But just the way this game was going and having no timeouts left, I said let's just hold for the last shot.

So we were going to go at :10, and Coach DeFalco and Coach Jose said let's go at :12. So we went at :12 and really we were trying to get the ball back in Lauren's hands. Her first look was to score the ball herself. Her second look was to dump to Sidney. And her third look was to create.

And Lauren's come a long way being able to trust all her teammates. That's why she's an elite point guard. And she trusted Mya. Mya was open, stepped in and shot the ball. She executed the play as well as we could have hoped.

Q. You have -- of all the games, this is the shortest bench we've seen. And a game like that really takes it out from a mental as well as a physical viewpoint. Are you guys going to be warn out tomorrow?

COACH BOZZELLA: We run a lot in practice, and we've practiced a ton of times this year. We'll utilize our bench a little more. It was just the flow of the game, the way the game was going.

We have some really good players -- Katie Armstrong, Curtessia Dean, Amari Wright -- all of them are good. But those three, I'm sure, will have a big say in tomorrow's game for us as well. They'll need to play well for us to be successful tomorrow.

The one thing that Lauren Park-Lane, who leads the Big East in minutes, I think top five or six in the country, she only gets mad at me for one thing and that's to take her out. So I don't want her mad at me.

Q. Obviously wasn't mad today.

COACH BOZZELLA: No, no. So obviously we're going to need to get some more people in our rotation. But when you play in the semifinals of the Big East and you step on

the floor -- and our crowds have been great, and obviously all your media have been amazing, thank you so much -- your energy level raises. So these girls will be good, I'm confident in that.

Q. There was obviously that very confusing and quite lengthy situation involving the foul that was called on Andra about six and a half minutes left in the game. And considering it was a lengthy timeout, you're down four, not in action -- what does it take, as a coach, just making sure their focus is on the action, not really thinking about the fact that we haven't been on the court for five minutes while they're reviewing all this, and unexpectedly it turned out to be a media timeout?

COACH BOZZELLA: It was hard. I haven't faced that in a long time. I kept going over the same plays and the same plays. Then we go to media timeout after that.

I thought the referees handled it really well. This is a hard game to ref. And I thought Jeff (phonetic) and Teresa (phonetic) did an outstanding job of trying to maintain control. Andra elbowed her, and it was a foul. And we had to pay the price of the foul.

The refs moved on from that and they obviously were able to make both foul shots. I thought the big play in that was we stopped them on that possession. I think if they had gone to eight, that would have been a problem. They ended up getting it to seven at one point. But Lauren hit a big 3, cut it to four and stuff.

But that was hard. Look, credit for just staying the course, getting their emotions in check. Whenever we play Creighton, it's a very emotional, physical, difficult game. And today was no different.

Q. This is your first win in three tries against Creighton in the Big East Tournament? How does that feel? And the follow-up to that, what's the strategy? What will it take to beat Villanova tomorrow?

COACH BOZZELLA: I don't think there's anyone that has more respect for Creighton and their program than myself. I think their players are tremendous. I think they play so hard. And I think Jim Flanery is one of the best coaches in the country.

They're going to do well in the NCAA Tournament because they're a great team. I never look at it, well, they beat us.

I honestly would rather have them beat us because they're really good and stuff.

So we learned from it. We knew it was going to be a hard

game. I think someone told me four of our last six games were overtime. So they've just had the edge on us, and I give them credit for that.

But I don't look at it, oh, we beat Creighton. I think we just beat a really good team, and this is going to help us take one more step towards playing more games in the playoffs and in the Big East.

And tomorrow's going to be a hard game. They have the best player in the league. And they're obviously another well-coached team, and their kids fight hard and play hard. But we'll do our best as well, too.

I think playing on this court twice now, hopefully will get our shooting legs back and shooting confidence back. Because we're a much better shooting team than we shot. I think tomorrow we'll have a great shooting day. I really believe that in my heart. I do.

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