

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Marquette Golden Eagles

Coach Megan Duffy

Karissa McLaughlin

Postgame Media Conference



UConn - 71, Marquette - 51

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Marquette.

COACH DUFFY: Congratulations to Connecticut. I thought obviously that first quarter they came out, threw every punch we could barely handle. Their defense was tremendous.

I thought we had some good offensive looks in that first quarter but we were unable to make them. The highs of highs from yesterday, we were making everything. In that first quarter we were definitely very cold.

And that led them to getting anything they wanted in that first quarter -- downhill attacks, open 3s. They had some great back cuts and after that we couldn't quite recover.

Q. Coming from Purdue and playing here at Marquette, what's it been like playing with Coach Duffy and gelling with this team this entire season?

KARISSA MCLAUGHLIN: It's been a privilege to play for Coach Duffy and this coaching staff and to play amongst an incredible group of young ladies who work hard every single day. And I wouldn't trade it for the world to finish my career off at this university.

Q. UConn played a lot of 4-guard lineup. Was that difficult -- I know you're a guard, but what kind of look did that give you guys?

KARISSA MCLAUGHLIN: I think they adjusted throughout the game, a lot of guard matchups, post matchups. They scored a ton in the paint. But I think we just constantly had to adjust to what they were throwing us. And I think consistently we -- not consistently, but towards the end, the last 15 minutes, I think we really competed at the level we

wanted to.

Q. You finished the game high 15 points. Seemed like you were getting a lot of shots that you're accustomed to make. What were you seeing out there offensively for yourself?

KARISSA MCLAUGHLIN: Coach Duffy wants her scorers and playmakers to stay aggressive. And I was just doing everything I could to keep my team in it.

Q. For you last year, you had your season cut short -- you only played seven games because of an injury. For you to make it wire to wire, not missing a single game this year, how much did that mean to you? And obviously -- unless you have a lot more basketball postseason ahead of you -- but what was it for like you to finish this season strong with a pretty solid shooting night, knocking down three 3-points and seven 3s in this tournament alone?

KARISSA MCLAUGHLIN: Just the teammates I'm surrounded by and the coaching staff, I'm really excited to play for this team. And to be able to do it at this university is very special. I wouldn't trade it for the world. But, it was just fun basketball this year and I really enjoyed it.

Q. Obviously you knew you weren't going to get 105 points today, but can you just talk about what UConn does on defense that makes it so tough? Their last four exponents didn't get over 40 points. Can you address what it is they do that is so hard to score against?

KARISSA MCLAUGHLIN: Their physicality, first and foremost, gets people out of their offense, makes it harder to get the ball on the wings, pushes you out more in the post. Overall it makes it hard because of their physicality and length, so you have to adjust to that throughout the game, what takes you off your offense.

Q. (Off microphone)?

KARISSA MCLAUGHLIN: I think that perfectly describes



this team -- the fight, the willingness to never give up. Every single person knows they matter on this team and invests in their role. Just to see people picking people up, taking extra rebounds, just the fight in this team is what's going to continue to go on in postseason. That's what I've loved so much playing with this team throughout the year.

Q. Make your case for being in the NCAA Tournament. What have you done that makes you worthy of making the Big Dance?

COACH DUFFY: I can speak on since I've been in the Big East this is the most depth, top to bottom. Obviously Connecticut, you watch them and they're just starting to peak at the right time.

But between Villanova, Creighton, us and DePaul, there's a lot of talent. I think we've kind of beat each other up a little bit, which I think across the country people have to start taking a look at that with our league. Throw Seton Hall in there.

And when you have star power like a Van Kleunen, like Morrow, like Siegrist, they're student-athletes and women who should be on the national stage in the tournament.

I think for our team, we've always been a well-balanced team. We've been one of the top defensive teams in the country. We share the basketball, as you saw us yesterday. A dangerous team that we can get hot if we have an opportunity to do it.

So I hope the committee will take a peek at us and understand what Marquette has done in the past historically the last few years and how we have the ability to make some noise if we have that opportunity.

Q. Lauren Van Kleunen, you've called her the heartbeat of this team before. You sought it out today, despite going 0-7 to start, a quick seven points to start the second half. How would you describe what she's meant to this program as now she's closed off her Big East journey?

COACH DUFFY: I've been so lucky to be her coach for a couple of years. And the way she embodies what's right in college athletics and women's sports. And she's one of the most selfless kids I've ever been around, always asking what can I do for this team.

It's never about her ego. She's kind of got that old-school, Tim Duncan game to her, where she hook shots and picking her teammates off the ground.

Lauren had a lot on her shoulders this year when we lost a

few players, Selena Lott specifically. She wanted it so bad all year. I think that led to a little bit of her inconsistency at times.

But just the last, really, two weeks of the season, the way she's been completely, literally giving every ounce of what's left in her energy-wise and helping her young players is just something special. And I know she's somebody that we're going to shed some tears when we're officially done on the season.

But just the way she's been first-team all-conference and led from that post-player position when she has to have other people get her the ball, and just the way she's been consistent. And really this year she's been on everybody's top of the scouting report -- two and three bodies around her. And she's handled it with just the utmost class and poise and just I'm going to miss her a lot when it's all said and done.

Q. Can you talk about what makes UConn's defense so hard to play against. As Pat said, they held the last four opponents to under 40 points.

COACH DUFFY: I can speak on it because I got to play against Connecticut as a player too. And my evolution of becoming a head coach in our league, I've always felt, despite all the firepower and offense year to year, the most difficult thing is how do you score against them.

And this year's team, as they get healthier and have more depth, it only makes them stronger. They're big. They're long. They're physical.

They have players on their team who want to defend. Nika Muhl, the way she wants to set the tone that way. And bringing Westbrook. And you have the length of adding Dorka to the mix, too, gives them, when you think you could substitute, okay, you might have an advantage of some of your cuts and movement, he just keeps bringing players in. And obviously earlier the season that was not the case.

But I think the teams that have been successful against them can really score at a high clip, can shoot the 3 ball well and have that balance of inside/outside attack. Even watching Villanova earlier this year, they hit a lot of shots from the perimeter.

If you can do that, you might have a chance. But the physicality, their position defense is what is most impressive to me.

Q. You did win the second half. And what did you do? What changes did you make to allow you to deal with

that defense a little better?

COACH DUFFY: We made a couple of adjustments on the defensive end. But, you know, we just had to kind of get almost like, what the heck, you're down 20, now you've got to play a little looser.

You're obviously playing against the crowd too. Nobody's in your favor. I thought we just finally settled down. We got some good shots in that first quarter. Open jumpers. That if you look at last night's game, we made every single one of them. And we were very short on a lot of them in that first quarter.

I thought that after that first quarter we were pressing and going a lot one-on-one. And I told our team, there's going to be opportunities for you to personally create. But Marquette basketball, the way we've been successful is sharing that basketball, running our offense and spreading people out.

I thought when we got back to a little more of that, I thought the efficiency of scoring the basketball improved for us.

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