

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Villanova Wildcats

Coach Denise Dillon

Maddy Siegrist

Brianna Herlihy

Postgame Media Conference



Villanova - 64, Seton Hall - 55

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in Villanova.

COACH DILLON: We expected a tough battle out there. Of course, Big East play, semifinal game. And it was exactly that. Seton Hall is an extremely talented team. And just extremely proud of our group, especially these two to my left for leading the way and keeping us composed when necessary and coming up with a huge win for our program. And looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. Maddy, was there an expectation that Seton Hall was going to make a run at you, which kind of has happened in the past? How do you think you were able to survive that run?

MADDY SIEGRIST: Yeah, just watching them play, they would go on runs. They're very talented offensively, and they can score very quickly. We knew, all right, that was their run. And we kept calm the whole time. And I think that really helped us, especially with a few of the turnovers. Like, we were able to come back from that.

Q. How much do you take or can you learn from the UConn win that you guys had a couple of weeks ago? And obviously more at stake here and you're playing a bit of a different team with them since they're more healthy or healthier now.

MADDY SIEGRIST: I think you just take it like, again, another game, take it one play at a time. I think it's exciting. That was our goal coming here this weekend to come into the Big East championship. We did that. We'll come play 40 minutes tomorrow of Villanova basketball and hopefully we win.

BRIANNA HERLIHY: I think we definitely have an expectation that it's going to be a lot harder tomorrow knowing that they're coming back for a revenge game. I think we just have that mindset. But we made it to the championship. So we're going to play like we're playing in a championship.

Q. Brianna, you looked like you were on a mission from the first moment of the game. Not only scoring but rebounding. How much of that was fueled by an individual thing that you just didn't want your college career to come to an end?

BRIANNA HERLIHY: Yeah, the game at Seton Hall that we lost in the season really stung for me. I think coming into the game today, I just, from the beginning, my mentality was we're going to win this game no matter what. Whatever we had to do, whatever I had to do I was going to do it.

Q. I know Brianna mentioned that this is going to be a revenge game for UConn because they lost to you guys a month ago. But I feel like, for you two, they're thinking 72-69. I feel you two must be thinking 84-39 because that was the score a year ago. Do you think there might be -- sure they might be motivated, but that loss a year ago in this building must be fueling you, maybe even more?

MADDY SIEGRIST: Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think that stung for everybody last year. And especially me personally, I thought about that game a lot. And you just use it as fuel in the offseason.

I think tomorrow, we got a lot going for us, too, I think. We're just going to play the best we can, and it's exciting to play in a championship. And I think we're going to play hard. Play well.

BRIANNA HERLIHY: I agree. I definitely think about that game a lot as well. It was they came out and they kind of jumped on us from the start. And we kind of folded, I don't want to say that, but --



I think this year, going into it, we're all remembering it and we're using that as fuel to go into a game tomorrow and hopefully come out with a win.

Q. Expanding a little bit on that. You said you kind of folded. Well, tonight you didn't. I mean, that was a pretty tough fourth quarter. There were way more turnovers than Villanova usually has but you did pull it out. And how does that help take that step into the next --

BRIANNA HERLIHY: I think that seeing how they went on their runs and we were able to stay calm and just play our own game really shows how we have matured and the growth we've had from last season. So I think it's really exciting to go into this game against UConn knowing that we have grown that much since last season and now we can sustain, if anyone goes on a run, we're going to be fine we're going to play our game and that's how we're going to win games.

MADDY SIEGRIST: I think resilience is a big thing with our team this year. We faced a lot of adversity with injuries and COVID. We've had to play a lot of really close games before. So the good thing is we're not afraid of that moment. We're not afraid to play in the close games.

Q. It seemed like yesterday I was watching a really controlled offense and a lot of movement, a lot of passing. And for a period early in the third, maybe it was late in the second, I can't remember, but it looked like everything was let's throw it and take the first 3 we possibly can and in this case missing most of them. What happened?

COACH DILLON: What happened, why we were doing that? Well, they were sagging off us. And the 3 was open. And we did talk about us getting that shot later in the clock, just continue to go move the ball and executing.

I think we did a better job in the second half of doing just that. But it was really just the allure of, I'm open, I'm going to take a shot. And things weren't going our way so much in the second quarter so players were just trying to make plays. And then we settled in at halftime, talked it over, made those adjustments in the second half.

Q. What did you take or what can you take away from the last time you played UConn a couple of weeks ago. And second one, Tony gave a fiery speech for disrespect not only for his team but the Big East. He gave you guys a lot of credit for being a team that shouldn't be in the bubble to begin with. Just your thoughts on this conference and how strong it is going

forward for the NCAA committee?

COACH DILLON: I think that's it. The Big East is an incredible league. It's a great league. And UConn has obviously dominated when they were here some years back. And then came in last year and did the same.

I think the conversation was shrinking the scoring gap. Our teams, the coaches were discussing that. And you saw it happen this season. And then obviously us pulling the win out a few weeks back was huge. And I just think that is why the league deserves more recognition, that we should be in that -- not just the conversation, but we should be on that board as well for the NCAA Tournament.

And it's just an example. It just gave our group that understanding and confidence to know that they can -- we talk about competing nationally and us wanting to be in that position. And it shows that we we're capable of doing that. And it's obviously what has gotten us to this point playing a championship game.

Q. In the past you've talked about situational basketball at the end of the game and your experience players had to lead you. Can you talk about what those experienced players did at the end of the game?

COACH DILLON: Right. Again, it was tough down the stretch, that fourth quarter. And you're looking, you see, like, you have a lead and how quickly Seton Hall can score and come back. And we were getting the ball in Maddy's hands, which everybody is aware that you're going to. And I have to tell you, and it was probably her biggest assist she made kicking that ball back to Lior and Lior knocking that shot down.

Lior, as a sophomore, just her sheer will, like what she's looking to do out there. She's really unassuming. You're like, okay, Lior is just hanging out. The next thing she's driving to the basket. And then she gets that big 3 and you can see the fire.

So it just showed Maddy didn't just try to make a play knowing it was down the stretch. She relied on her teammates once again. And a huge assist and great shot for Lior just for us to feel a little bit more of a cushion at that point.

Q. You've talked all year about Lucy and her ability to take care of the ball for you and keep you guys calm. How big was she down the stretch when Seton Hall started to add the pressure?

COACH DILLON: I think, down the stretch, most definitely. But just throughout the contest, she had someone on her

hip throughout the game.

And I think Lucy just hears it every day when she's playing. Every time she's dribbling that basketball, she's realizing, take care of the ball, don't turn it over.

What pressure she's seen throughout this season is only going to -- I think Lucy is a great player right now. I just think that the sky's the limit with what she's capable of doing for us, as her role continues to develop.

But today, yes, she wasn't fazed. She wanted the ball in the back court. She wanted to be up there breaking the press. And she was making good decisions there as well.

But when you're being pressed like that, you need all five involved. It couldn't just be Lucy and Lior. We were relying a little too much on that. We have to make a quick adjustment before tomorrow.

Q. There seems to be like an expectation on this team to win games. I didn't see that at the beginning of the year. And now it's almost like they think we're going to win these games. Is there a time a game or an event that you can pinpoint that you saw that attitude adjustment?

COACH DILLON: The expectation is certainly placed on the team early. And it's a conversation you're having in the preseason workouts when practice started officially.

But it really came down to us then having the conversation of, it can't be us, what the coaches' expectation is. It has to be the decision that the team makes as to what they want to be, or we're just fighting against each other.

And I think when that happened, they were aware, like, okay, we've got to make a decision how good are we willing to be this season.

It was the turning point really, again, when we got everyone back, when Maddy returned. We battled through some games and came up with wins just fighting until the end. And it was the Lehigh game, I saw a lot more grit from our group, them gaining confidence without Maddy on the floor. And then when she got back, I think I would say it was the Oregon State game.

I think that's when the game just slowed down for this team. Like they were listening. They were tuned in. They were working together and coming up with a win, a Top 25 win at that point, to show, okay, maybe we are capable of doing something. Again, led by Maddy and Brianna with the conversations, taking young players under their wing, just doing everything necessary for Brianna to have her

best last year.

And, as I said, Maddy being one of the best players in the country. It's not just about her putting numbers up; she knew she needed to lead her team to be in national contention.

Q. With UConn tomorrow, how do you plan on slowing down or stopping Azzi Fudd. Last time she got 18 points?

COACH DILLON: There's many UConn players that need to be slowed down and stopped. But I think with Azzi, just her ability to get shots off from the 3 -- a pull-up jumper. She can score in so many different areas.

Just counting on, again, the understanding of less touches allows less attempts. So putting that assignment out there for the team.

But with UConn, you've got to honor each and every one of the players that's on the floor. So we've got to step up our defensive game, of course, and be able to execute what we want to on offense.

At this point in the season it comes down to you've gotta make shots. You've gotta make shots and get those stops. It's irrelevant if you're coming up empty on one end or the other.

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