

# Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Monday, March 7, 2022

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

**Villanova Wildcats**

**Coach Denise Dillon**

**Brianna Herlihy**

**Maddy Siegrist**

Postgame Media Conference



UConn - 70, Villanova - 40

**COACH DILLON:** Congratulations to Connecticut. Played a tremendous game from start to finish. Just came out ready to go and showed us what Connecticut basketball is. But as I just said to our team how proud I am of them and their effort and getting us here in the championship game and giving us a taste of what it's about. And wanting to get back here for sure.

**Q. Brianna, can you talk about how tough it was to defend inside? Connecticut looked like they were going inside for the baskets.**

**BRIANNA HERLIHY:** They have obviously really a lot of size inside. So we were trying to front and they would lob. We would try to stay behind and they would get the ball in the post.

So it was definitely tough. They definitely put up a really good fight especially with Nelson-Ododa, the two bigs to guard. It was definitely a tough battle inside.

**Q. I don't know if you've thought about it at this point, any feeling about that was your last game, collegiate game?**

**BRIANNA HERLIHY:** No, I don't think we're done yet.

**Q. Maddy, how tough were they physically defending you today?**

**MADDY SIEGRIST:** They're very physical. It's nothing like we haven't seen before. Just they have five players that are physical, not just one or two.

**Q. Talk a little bit about the environment here. This was loud and crazy. What was it like leading into it, something, have you ever experienced anything like that? If so, how long did it take to get used to the environment and not think about it?**

**BRIANNA HERLIHY:** We kind of knew going into it that there was going to be a lot of UConn fans and it would feel a bit like a home game for UConn. We mentally prepared ourselves for that and knew that was going to be the reality of the situation.

But I think, just moving forward, like, obviously we're going to see them a lot more times in the future. So just kind of keeping our head and staying within our own team and making sure we have each other's backs and we're not listening to the outside noise.

**Q. I know that there is going to be postseason basketball for you in realistic way. It should not have to be the WNIT; it should be the NCAA. And for you, knowing that UConn is really as good as it gets nationally, do you think you may have something to take away in terms of, for an NCAA Tournament, wherever you go, does it give you a little bit of peace of mind knowing that whoever you go up against next in that first round it's not going to be anywhere near as difficult or daunting going up against a team like that?**

**MADDY SIEGRIST:** I guess a little bit. But you go into every game with the same mentality. You respect everyone, fear no one. And I think that's just the mentality we'll have hopefully in the NCAA Tournament.

**BRIANNA HERLIHY:** I definitely agree with that. You can't go into any game from this point on thinking that you're just going to roll over a team because everyone's playing for the same spot. Everyone wants a spot in the national championship game. You can't underestimate anyone at this point.

**Q. Can you talk about what the biggest difference was between the last time you played them? Obviously they have more players back. But especially**



**defensively, what was the biggest difference?**

BRIANNA HERLIHY: I think they were just a lot more prepared for our offense. I feel like the first time we kind of caught them off guard with that. We were able to get more of our cuts, able get into our offense a little easier because they were a little hesitant, they didn't know what we were going to do. But I feel this time they were a lot more prepared for it, and they threw us off our rhythm from the beginning.

MADDY SIEGRIST: We made shots last time and we didn't today. Defensively I don't know what we held them to. But it wasn't 90. It wasn't 100. So they scored the ball. We just didn't make shots today.

**Q. The score, to beat UConn, how much do those scoring droughts hurt as you went through the first --**

COACH DILLON: Oh, yeah. It was from the start. Even Lior, Lior is one of our top shooters, second-leading scorer, and just missing early and just affected us from the jump. We realized the physicality was going to be a big factor. Brianna mentioned being knocked off her mark a little bit with that.

But I think Maddy did some of that in games like this. You've got to make shots and get stops. And I thought we battled aggressively on the defensive end, but we weren't connecting on the offensive end.

**Q. You bring up Maddy. And there were times, especially in the second half where the offense, looked like it was stalling, and Maddy took it all on her shoulders and scored almost at will in tough situations and also that hustle play where Aaliyah, looked like she had a break-away layup and Maddy hustled back and swatted it out. What does that say about the tenacity and the will to win, even when you're getting beat by 20 plus?**

COACH DILLON: That's Maddy's greatest growth as a player. She's is the Big East Player of the Year, so she's giving it her all every possession of the game. That's where we've gotten that from her.

She's carried us in so many different areas of the game and situations. And she's a competitor. Never going to let up. Just battling from start to finish.

Maddy just loves the game. She loves being on the floor. So any chance she is out there she's competing. She showed that today, didn't let up a minute.

**Q. On the no shots, how much of it was it just wasn't**

**your night going down, and how much was it they're showing you a whole different persona coming in and probably ramping the pressure up a little bit?**

COACH DILLON: They definitely ramped up the pressure. I think just forcing us out of our natural position. We're starting the offense higher than we would have liked. Made some adjustments there. But even the second half we went through stretches where we were getting some looks and just not capitalizing.

So, of course, it works both ways. And shooting, it's contagious. If you make some of those shots, whether it was early in the game or, as I said, in the second half, I think you get into a little bit of a rhythm. It just didn't happen. It wasn't our night on the offensive end.

**Q. You talked about Herlihy and her leadership all season. Your down 27, she dives out of bounds to save the ball and get it back to Runyan. What does it say for her and the younger kids for her leadership?**

COACH DILLON: I said it earlier, Brianna Herlihy practiced every day and played every game as if it was her first time out on the floor, just embracing that opportunity. Just that example is so important for our program.

We have five freshmen. I say it regularly, I want them to recognize. You have sixth year player, ACL injury, missed a year, gives everything to this program, and there's nothing more rewarding as a coach than to see that and knowing the future is bright because of the foundation -- not the foundation, she's been doing this and many players before her, but what she has left at this time. It's a great example that I'll use for years to come for the players around her.

**Q. I know you said the shots weren't going down. Just one opponent out of UConn's last nine has scored over 50 points. Most of those scored 40 or under. What is the difference defensively in this team from the last time you saw them and is it just a function of having more bodies to run in and out?**

COACH DILLON: I would think. You're able to -- your rotation is a little deeper so you can be more aggressive and get away. You're physical and picking up some fouls. You have other players coming into the game quickly.

So certainly, with just the five or six that I think they had a few weeks back. Now they're nine deep and just going strong.

**Q. If you could make a message to the NCAA Selection Committee, what would you tell them about**



**the quality of your team and their potential spot in the NCAA postseason?**

COACH DILLON: I think just looking at our resumé, you look at it again from January on, everyone talks about UConn missing out with Paige, and others not in some games. We played six games without the Player of the Year and we go 20, what do we have, 20 wins straight with her, 18-of-22.

So just really proud of the effort put forth. I think we did exactly what we needed to from that point on when we got her back and put us in the championship game with the Player of the Year in the Big East and one of the best in the nation.

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