

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Seton Hall Pirates

Coach Anthony Bozzella

Victoria Keenan

Postgame Media Conference



Seton Hall - 84, Xavier - 58

COACH BOZZELLA: Congratulations to Xavier for coming out and playing as hard as they did. I know their record isn't what they want it to be, and obviously it's not obviously a positive record.

But I will say this, I looked at all of Xavier's scores in the past 10 games, including losing by 12 points to Connecticut in their last game, and they haven't given up. It's a testament to their coach. They've been through a lot of injuries and a lot of tough things this year.

And Coach and her staff have been playing really hard. And I know next year, with that staff and everything, they're going to be a much improved team in the win column as well.

I give Melanie the credit and her staff a lot of credit for doing that. You look at the last 10 games, while they weren't wins they played everyone tough including Connecticut recently.

We knew we would have a formidable challenge in front of us. I was really pleased with our defense and rebounding. Obviously the young lady to my left shot tremendously. That's what she does really well.

But what she also did really well, and I told her this in the huddle tonight, was she competed on the defensive end fantastically. And she was in there for a lot of loose balls and tips and rebounds and just deflections. I think she had six deflections which is tremendous. And I know she had at least two defensive rebounds in the game when it was a 50/50 game.

And a lot of people can talk about her shooting, which you should, she's a fantastic shooter. And she's an amazing

young woman who has been through a tremendous amount of adversity, two knee operations and been through a lot in her career.

And there's no one I'd rather have sitting next to me because she deserves it because of her hard work, her attitude, her team-oriented persona. I've had a lot of kids have a lot of great games, but I haven't had anyone be as enthusiastically applauded by her teammates than Victoria was today. And that's a tribute to her as a person.

I'm proud of our team overall. It's not easy to win. I don't care who you play, when you play. And to win the game and to do it the way we did is important.

Q. Victoria, the one observation, in terms of the 3s that you made, almost the same exact spot on the court, the wing. Is there something about that spot specifically? And how would you best describe the zone that you got in, getting those shots in that spot?

VICTORIA KEENAN: Once I knew I was in rhythm, once I get two under me I know exactly, catch and shoot. Don't even think about anything else. I mean, Coach and the girls really get on me about not shooting and trying to dribble and trying to look for them. But I'm so team oriented, it's not about my shot; I just want to get the win.

When I get it on the wing I'm really comfortable there and in the corners. But wherever it is on the floor I'm just going to knock it down.

Q. Midway through the second quarter, seemed like things kind of changed. It was a tight game and then you guys went on a pretty big run and built a lead that you never relinquished. From your perspective what do you think changed there in that second quarter?

VICTORIA KEENAN: I think we had to be more aggressive on defense and get a couple more stops under our belt so we were more comfortable. But you never get comfortable because with Xavier you know they're coming back and they're going to fight each possession.

Q. I heard Coach say nobody deserved that moment

... when all is said, we're done.®



more with your teammates after the game. When you think about your journey as a Seton Hall Pirate and the injuries and those tough times, how rewarding is this for you at the Big East Tournament to have this type of performance?

VICTORIA KEENAN: I give everyone credit throughout the journey. I mean, it was tough. It was hard. And there's days I wanted to quit. But my teammates kept, like, nagging me, come on, you got this, like, one more rep. Come on, get in there.

And I just continued to work my butt off. And Coach was there with me telling me, go shoot, keep going, whether you're going to get surgery or not, just keep shooting, keep getting in rhythm, stay locked in as if you're going to play. And here I am.

Q. When you guys had your lead cut to eight, you called the timeout. And it was like a switch got flipped for you guys ending the half on an 18-6 run. What were you telling your team in the huddle that must have resonated with them to turn that eight-point margin into 20 heading into the locker room?

COACH BOZZELLA: I think when you have a veteran point guard who is one of the best in the country like Lauren, I think Lauren did a lot of talking in that huddle.

And her leadership skills are something that she's really worked on a lot. And today she was a tremendous leader. I was very proud of her because it was a very frustrating game for her frustrating for her. And she didn't let it affect her.

I just let her do a lot of the talking. We said, come on, we've got to get some stops now. Xavier was going downhill on us. We played them a couple of games ago. They scored 40 points in the paint by driving the ball. We needed to stop that.

Today they only had 20 points -- no, in the paint they only had 24 points. We chopped that off by 16 points. We did a really good job on them for that.

Q. You got a ton of production out of your bench. Victoria went off for 18. Jala Jordan with 12. Amari Wright had to take over a lot of point guard duties when Lauren Park-Lane had to go out. What can you say to the success of your bench, and how is that going to help you in the tournament?

COACH BOZZELLA: So much. Obviously Victoria was great. We saw that. And Jala was fantastic. She really has had a rough month, but she has great parents who

raised her with the motto of just keep playing and keep playing hard and working hard. And she did. And she does.

And she was tremendous today, not just with her points, but on her defense. It was really good.

And then Amari, I've said this many times, if Amari can keep her confidence up, she's one of the best point guards around, Big East, wherever. If she's on a lot of other teams, she's going to be their starter. She just happens to play behind a great player.

I love Amari. Her defense today was amazing. I know she only had four rebounds but she must have had four, five deflections. She's a great kid. She's a really good, quiet leader. She's very well respected by her teammates. And that says a lot about Amari and how she's been raised by her parents as well.

Q. You really tapped into the bench today. This is the most I've seen your bench, really well balanced. Looking into tomorrow you have a tough matchup against Creighton obviously. Creighton holds the 2-0 series lead against you guys during the regular season. But last season some magic happened and hopefully tomorrow you're looking forward to some magic tomorrow. But with your bench and how you expanded your bench, are you looking to ride the hot hand, using your bench as well as you did today? Or is it just because Park-Lane struggled and had four fouls that you really tapped into your bench that much?

COACH BOZZELLA: We're always going to play Amari. Amari is a fantastic ball player. We have 10 kids. I thought Kae Satterfield gave us a really good nine minutes at the end of the game, six points and four rebounds. She can do a lot for us.

I think we're going to play whoever is hot, whoever the matchups are. Creighton is so well-coached and such talented, talented players at 1 through 5.

Tough matchups for us. We'll need Sidney to really establish herself in the paint tomorrow. She'll have to do a really good job of that and score the ball for us, because they're going to attack her on the other end. We need that. And obviously we need Lauren to play more than 26 minutes.

Amari has got to come in, play the way she can. Obviously we'd love Vic to make five or six 3s tomorrow. That would be amazing. But we're going to use all 10, and we're going to play it by ear. I think Azana Baines is one of the best

players in the league right now. She only had nine points and four rebounds. I think we got some rest for our kids. I think we're going to come out with a lot of energy and a lot of excitement.

Obviously Creighton is a team in the NCAA Tournament already. And I think an amazing, amazing bunch of players and so well-coached. It's going to be a tremendous challenge for us. We haven't played as well as we were playing last year at this time.

Maybe today will spur us on. We know we have the talent. If we can put it together, defend a lot better than we did the first two times, then we're going to have a chance, otherwise it's going to be a long night, because they're very good.

Q. You're not just a coach but you're a viewer of this sport nationally. And tomorrow, in the quarterfinals of the Big East Tournament you have UConn/Georgetown, Marquette/St. John's, two of the top four scorers in the country with Villanova and DePaul and then you guys and Creighton, and we know about the epic games you've played. What kind of an advertisement for the conference and the sport is tomorrow here at Mohegan Sun?

COACH BOZZELLA: It's tremendous. What the other coaches in our league have done is tremendous. Joe is a well-deserved Coach of the Year. Look at the job that Megan and Denise have done as well. Doug lost both his point guards, and he's a team no one would want to play right now.

And obviously we know how successful Creighton is, going to the Elite Eight and look at how well they're playing right now. This is as wide open a Big East tournament as we've had since I've been here, but also probably since Connecticut has been in the league. Maybe they've taken a little step back but obviously they're tremendous players and tremendous coaches.

But a lot of teams in our league have played them really tough and really well. Like I said, we beat Xavier by 26 and they didn't look that good at times tonight, but the last game, they only lost by like 12 to Connecticut. So we have a lot of talent in our league. And this league is well-deserved league of four, five, six bids. And we're frustrated because we didn't do enough to earn our chance as an at-large, but we know that if we play our game, then we have a chance to beat anyone in this league.

And while tomorrow will be extremely, extremely difficult, we're going to come out with a lot of confidence. We're going to play loose and play fun. I'll tell you, you'll Seton

Hall make 12 to 15 3s tomorrow. Seton Hall is going to play well tomorrow. I hope it's enough, but we will play well tomorrow.

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