

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

St. John's Red Storm

Coach Joe Tartamella

Postgame Media Conference



Marquette - 57, St. John's - 47

COACH TARTAMELLA: Look, I was really pleased how we played for the better part of the game. I thought it was a typical game that you see with Marquette. And whether the pace favored them at the time, I thought it also favored us.

So I think the way that the game went, up until where our execution trailed off and theirs was better late in the game, I thought we did a lot of really good things.

And so, look, the finish of the game is obviously disappointing. I think, again, as the first game of the day you see the strength of the league up and down and how close the teams are and how strong the teams are.

And so I hope that today's game proved that again to those that have to see it when they look at the postseason stuff. And I think all year our league has fought, and obviously Marquette's been one of those guys just like we have.

But I was pleased with the way that we played, the toughness we had. A very different feel to this game and the stakes are high, but it's a great moment for our team to be in this position and see how we react.

So, I thought we really came in and started the game beautifully. Although it felt like we played for 10 minutes straight in the first quarter without a break. So I think both teams were a little gassed early. I was pleased how we did getting it to the half but just didn't finish.

Q. King, Karlen and Marotta combined for 50 of the 57 points. What made it hard to stop that trio today?

COACH TARTAMELLA: They basically do what they do. I thought we did a good job in kind of curtailing Marotta. Obviously she got in foul trouble in the first half. That did help.

But with the way we were trying to defend, I thought we were playing really well. I thought we were trying to grind as much as we could with the lineups that we had out there and seeing how people were going to be when they came in the game.

But they're good players. That's why they have a solid team. They're disciplined. And obviously Karlen gives them a big boost when she plays well, and we kind of allowed it.

I was, like I said, pleased with the way we rebounded early. And now you see it at 12 which is probably the smallest margin in the two games.

But they stay steady throughout the game. They don't get rattled. And so they're disciplined. And that's why it's, at times, hard to be able to fully stop them. You try to limit them when you can. But if we had probably been able to either lower Karlen's output even a little bit, it's a different game.

Q. You talk about Marotta, neutralizing her with foul trouble in the first half. But that fourth quarter seems like she really took over. What were you seeing from her in terms of how she was able to penetrate the defense and get the kind of looks that she's been making for four years, especially in the mid-range game?

COACH TARTAMELLA: She just gets to her spots. And so we didn't do a good enough job. I thought we did a good job getting around a couple times. We got caught on a couple of switches that we need to be better with.

But she finishes. When she's playing well she's obviously an All-Big East player for a reason. She just played the way she does. And we didn't get her off her spots enough, I thought, in the second half.

Q. Can you talk just a little bit about Rayven Peeples? She had ten rebounds tonight, what she brings in the post for you all.



COACH TARTAMELLA: Ray's been our unsung hero probably all year. Her development in the years she's been here is pretty phenomenal. And how she's been able to transform herself, not only as a player, but just physically, and has put herself in a position to have a pro career, I think.

She's been the anchor defensively for us. She really does a good job rebounding and, I think, being a great wall for us in there. And obviously we continue to want her to push it on the offensive end.

But I thought she did a really good job of helping us defensively where she played almost the whole game. So it's hard. We put a lot of pressure on them to be good and maybe we tired out a little bit.

Q. In the last five minutes of the game, was there anything schematically that changed, or did it just come down to they made the shots in that moment?

COACH TARTAMELLA: I think they had more bounce to them and probably had a little more energy. But no, they got to their spots; they executed better. They made the shots they needed to make and we didn't. And that's what it comes down to. We've been pretty good in most of the games that came down to it in the fourth. And today we weren't. I told our team, look, there's not a reason at all for us to ever hang our head and walk out of that locker room.

From where we were a year ago to what we've done all year, the things we've accomplished and being able to have the wins that we've had and really have no bad losses, I think, is probably the better thing that I look at for us as a group.

We have a win at UConn on the road. We have a win against Marquette and Creighton. But to have no bad losses is pretty amazing. And I've coached a long time. And you hate those to end the season, obviously.

But I couldn't be prouder of this group from where we came from. They shattered some things this year. And I think it's a great springboard for our program.

And you take chances both ways. And so I think a lot of these players found a home that they fell in love with and were able to succeed, not only on the court but off the court. So that whole group I love. They've got me for life, all these kids.

But this group particularly, we've got more to play. The season's not over, as I told them. A lot of teams lose in these games and the season's over. That's not the case here. We have to wait now and see.

But as I said, I think the Big East is on display again. I think you'll see it all day in how hard this league is, and I hope everyone took notice.

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