

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Marquette Golden Eagles

Coach Megan Duffy

Postgame Media Conference



Connecticut - 81, Marquette - 52

COACH DUFFY: I felt like that was the UConn of March we're used to seeing. I thought they were absolutely tremendous right out of the gate.

Can't say enough about Aaliyah Edwards. I think she's one of the most improved players in the entire country. I know Coach had challenged her probably in this tournament and this next month to really show it. She's an All-American in my eyes.

And I thought she really set the tone with her toughness and physicality. And then just became a little contagious with all their players.

Our defense was not up to our standards, but I think a lot of that was what UConn did.

But for our team, I'm very, very proud of what we've accomplished this season through a lot of ups and downs. We probably don't talk about it enough. But a very disappointed locker room for my team. But hopefully we'll be seeing you guys in a couple of weeks.

Q. Can you just make the case for your team making the NCAA Tournament after the first-round win here and after everything else you've done this season?

COACH DUFFY: I think we've had a really good season. Before the start of it we wanted to get out and challenge ourselves non-conference, going into the Battle 4 Atlantis, and beat Texas and Gonzaga. Took UCLA overtime. Went out and scheduled Colorado which has had a tremendous season.

Obviously this is the best. I'm fairly new to the Big East from a head-coaching side of things, but everybody tells me this is the best the league has been in a lot of years. And we're trying to get more recognition and attention to be

in that NCAA Tournament. You could talk about five, six teams.

We had a major injury with Liza Karlen No. 32. That took us out of some things in January. And having her back -- you could see it last night against St. John's, just how important she is to the team.

Our strength of schedule was pretty good. Our net was looking pretty good. I hope the body of work outside of tonight's game will be recognized.

Q. Obviously your big three played a big role in your win yesterday. On a day where they struggled a bit how big was it to see your freshmen duo, Emily and Mackenzie, step up the way they did?

COACH DUFFY: They were fine. I thought -- you can't put it on freshmen to bail us out of a game like this. Our big three have been tremendous -- Liza, Chloe and Jordan. Give UConn a lot of credit. I thought their big bodies, their physicality, some of our cuts and movement, we just couldn't do anything.

And it just forced us to take some difficult shots. And then I thought we got rattled a little bit.

We made a nice little run in the second quarter and I thought maybe the momentum was turning a little bit. But I think that's what we're seeing now with just even having Fudd back and didn't know if Ducharme was going to play today.

Their depth of having 10 available people is very different than maybe it was a month ago when there was five or six playing.

Not our best from our top players today. But they've carried us all season. And I like the future with our two freshmen.

Q. Yesterday you kind of talked about how Liza was that steady presence for you. How did that kind of carry over into today -- 18 points despite the struggles you guys faced?



COACH DUFFY: She got off to a great start and just playing some great basketball. She had a heck of an injury with her mouth and jaw. And could have been a season-ending injury and battled through that. Now she's getting her legs under her.

Maybe she's fresher than most people. But just was steady with her shooting, and just really happy for that kid to find some positive basketball here late in the season.

Q. You mentioned UConn's depth. What is the biggest difference in them right now than when they saw you guys on February 8th?

COACH DUFFY: Obviously that was a huge historic win for our program. And during that time, you're kind of in the gauntlet. Your schedule can be really hard. You're on the road. You're just playing back to back to back.

And I think the interesting part about the league this year is you can kind of -- probably the first time in a while you can catch some people off guard. I thought we played very well at our place. And they looked a little tired after that South Carolina game.

Like I said, we've been playing them -- play them three times every year, it's, like, gosh, it gets harder when you get to that March game, just the way they turn it up. And they look more confident. They're playing faster, their cuts and their movement, I think Coach has been trying to get them to do was in full effect today.

As you could see we were a step slow. And then you add them being 6'4" and 6'4" and 6'2" and 6'1" to our size, didn't help us when we were a step slow.

Q. How about UConn's defense? They seemed to have picked up the intensity in this tournament, certainly. Do you notice a difference between when you played them in the regular season and now defensively?

COACH DUFFY: Yeah, and I've said this a couple of times. Like, I think every time you play UConn it's a separate entity, meaning you can't say what worked in game two will work in game three; it's actually the opposite.

That's why they're very good. That's why they're so consistent because they don't give you the same things again. So you've got to be really on your toes with trying to find ways to score.

I've always said this. I know with the talent they have and the All-Americans year after year, I think people look at,

wow, Lou can score, and obviously Dorka and Edwards doing what they do.

But the other piece that I don't think they get enough credit for is when they're on, how good defensively they can be with their positioning, with their pressure. And now you add a few more bodies to that mix, where maybe a kid gets a couple-minute break at the media or whatever it is, I think that gets them obviously confident. And it's very, very difficult to score.

You've got to be able to shoot the 3. You've got to counter their physicality inside consistently through 40 minutes.

Q. If you could speak to the strength of the Big East in general. You mentioned the league is at the best it's been at since you've been here, but how does it speak to the strength of the league that it buffets your chance of getting in?

COACH DUFFY: I think we talked about it last year in the tournament, how when UConn came into the league a couple years ago, and our coaches tried to make a commitment, hey, we've got to pick up our game a little bit, whether that's recruiting, whether that's game planning.

We've got tremendous coaches in this league and just wanted to raise that bar a little bit more. And what I think you're seeing is the depth, even some of our lower-ranked teams, how much improved they are.

The different styles make our league challenging. You've got a Creighton and a Nova that's five out in cuts and moving and driving you crazy. And you have the physicality of UConn. Us, we're good defensively and fundamentally sound enough on offense.

And so I just think -- like I think all of the teams we've been talking about -- St. John's, with their talent at the guard position -- you put us all in the tournament, I think we'll be pretty happy because we know the gauntlet we've been through and the coaches we have on the sideline and these student-athletes that continue to -- I didn't even mention DePaul yet, with Morrow and Siegrist -- the stars in this league, I don't care what league you put them in, they're going to be good no matter what league it is.

So the talent is there. And I hope we'll be able to showcase as many as we can after Selection Sunday.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports