

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Creighton Bluejays

Coach Jim FLanery

Postgame Media Conference



Villanova - 63, Creighton - 61

COACH FLANERY: Yeah, I thought it was a really good basketball game. Two really competitive teams who know each other well. And I think the kind of irony is the two games we played in the regular season, neither one was that close.

And the one at our place, we got blown out in the first half. And the one at their place they got blown in the second half. So I knew -- or at least figured it would be a lot more competitive or tight throughout. And it was.

They have Maddy, and sometimes that's -- not to discredit their other players, but sometimes that's enough. That was the difference today, obviously. Not just the 37 points but doing it on 21 shots is tough.

And I thought we did, for the most part we did all right on her. We gave her the one wide-open 3, or two wide-open 3s, late. She made the first, missed the second. Other than that, she throws the ball in sometimes and looks like she isn't even looking. That's how talented she is.

So anyway, I thought we got a great look at the end. Lauren made a great basketball play. And I thought she was great down the stretch. Emma had a big game. And we had a chance to win.

When I told the team, one, I wouldn't be any more proud of you guys if we had won that game. And losing by one possession, that's irrelevant in terms of, I think, the quality of the team that we are and the character that we have.

And two, this was great preparation for the NCAA Tournament. I'd like one more game like this to prepare for the NCAA Tournament. But to play two one-possession games against two really good teams is going to be great for us in 12-ish days when we play against somebody.

So I'm disappointed but I'm excited because I think we showed what kind of team we are. I thought Villanova, obviously, did what they needed to do.

Q. What about games like this do help you prepare for the NCAA Tournament? I mean, the Big East has been so deep. Could you elaborate on that a little bit, please?

COACH FLANERY: I told them -- I'm not saying we're going to mirror the success that we had in the last season's postseason because obviously, unless you're South Carolina, you have to have a little bit of luck or good fortune.

But I told them, the league is better this year than it was a year ago, and the preparation that we had, both in the non-conference a year ago and in the conference, was really good and it prepared us to make a run in the NCAA Tournament.

And I don't see any difference other than I think the league is even better than it was a year ago. And we actually upgraded our non-conference schedule and played Stanford and teams like that. So we'll be ready.

I think, I'm excited because I feel like the pressure for one is important, right? You can't replicate -- regular-season basketball, there's pressure involved, but postseason basketball there's more pressure. You get kids that get that opportunity and hopefully get some of the nerves out.

But you also, as a coach, you can see who responds under pressure maybe a little bit more than other kids. So, like I said, I'm excited because I think this was really good prep for the NCAA Tournament.

Q. How did you guys try and defensively scheme against Maddy? I know that's an impossible task, but what were you trying to do, and what did she do to make it difficult for your defense tonight?

COACH FLANERY: Well, she can turn over either shoulder. She moves so well without the ball. They force you to switch enough that you end up with a smaller player



on her and she jumps over the smaller player. So they're creative that way.

And then she's a really good offensive rebounder. The big rebound on the air ball late -- when we play them we say, or when we play them the last couple of years, we say we've got to limit her offensive rebounds and we've got to kind of take away 3s.

And we helped on the post, on her, on post-ups a decent amount. But we switched matchups too. We played her with bigs but we also played her quite a bit with Rachael Saunders, who is 5'8". And Rachael can take away 3s and get up on her, but then you're going to need some help in the post. But we've played them enough that I think our kids have an understanding.

Mullin hit two 3s and we banked on maybe being able to help off her. And they had other kids make 3s. Orihel makes a big 3 and we did a great job on Olsen. It's not just Maddy.

The last game we played them, Burke hit five 3s in the third quarter. We can't let Burke and Olsen go off -- let's say we hold Maddy to 20, 22 -- if those guys, if Burke gets three to five 3s and we don't do a good job on Lucy, then it doesn't matter.

Q. You mentioned that Orihel 3 that gave them the biggest lead at the 7. It kind of felt like last night. How did you see your team's preparation to weather that storm and get it down to striking distance where you had a chance to tie the game in the final seconds?

COACH FLANERY: No question last night helped us today. I think anytime you've experienced something that recent, your memory and your belief is greater because of the recency of that comeback. I felt like our body language was good. In timeouts, we said there's still plenty of time.

They're gritty on defense. They're hard to score against. And with their length -- and so it's about stopping Maddy, but it's also about we bogged down on offense several times.

But, yeah, I didn't question that -- seven's more than you want it to be, but it's not insurmountable based on the fact that we held them to 63. It wasn't like we didn't defend pretty well. We just didn't defend Maddy as well as you want, but that's just because she's really damn good.

Q. In a sense your own program has now grown higher. But you look around the country, (indiscernible) season, Pac-12, Stanford, Utah comes along, champion today, Washington State?

COACH FLANERY: Did they win?

Q. Yes, over at UCLA. You look, Atlantic, Rhode Island, UMass all year, winner of 500 St. Louis. Is that the type of thing for coaches, you go there in the summer and you say, look at that, why not us?

COACH FLANERY: I'll just share a quick anecdote. When we were at Stanford we played them right after Tennessee played them. And Jon Harper -- an assistant at Tennessee for Kellie, married to her also -- he just said he thinks there will be a non-Power 5 team other than UConn in the Final Four in the next couple of years.

Whether he's right or wrong, I don't know. But I do feel like there's that opportunity. And had we maybe not played South Carolina, we would have had a little better chance last year. But I do think that there is hope.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

