

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

DePaul Blue Demons

Coach Doug Bruno

Postgame Media Conference



Seton Hall 71, DePaul 64

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from DePaul, head Coach Doug Bruno.

DOUG BRUNO: This has been a great group of young women to be around all year long. They've just been a great group, and it's been a joy to be with them every day and a joy to coach them.

At the same time they keep score for a reason. It's a competition. We play to have the score on our side and not on the other team's side. Seton Hall did a great job of taking it to us and beating us tonight.

I think the teams are very evenly matched, and they got out in front of us. I really believe the best way to have a chance to beat them was to zone them. We went the zone. We went a couple of different kinds of zones. We still gave up too many threes, too many open looks from the perimeter. I just thought we needed to do a better job of limiting the threes, and we didn't.

So we turned this into a free-for-all, and they made the most of it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What was Seton Hall doing disruptive that kept your three-point shooting at bay and also your ability to go on more runs?

DOUG BRUNO: Tony does a good job of taking away threes, taking away your layups, and they just did -- what did they do? They played good, solid, straight man-to-man defense. We had to do a better job to get open against them. And we tried to run some different things throughout the day, but we just weren't able to get open.

They did a great job of taking it to us defensively. We did

have some opportunities inside and I don't think made have a very good showing in and around the basket either. We did have some open looks at the rim that we did not capitalize on, nor did we get to the foul line when we got the ball to the block.

Q. Can you talk about your team's part that you were able to keep this game so close and contested even with Anaya and Jorie not having their best games of the season?

DOUG BRUNO: We have a really collectively good group of young women here. Anaya and Jorie are our two lead go-to players, and at the same time, Kate Gilbert and Jade Edwards is starting to find some health here. So there are some other people that are out there that can score the ball and make some kind of plays happen.

So I just think -- I think we've been able to be more than just the Jorie and Anaya show all year. I really do think there's more people that can score than just those two.

They got in foul trouble, and that was not good for us tonight either.

Q. Tomorrow your program is going to be honoring Khara Smith as a Big East Legend. I wonder if you can talk about her impact on the program and why she was selected.

DOUG BRUNO: Wow, that's a great, great way to get my head off of tonight because Khara is just such a great young woman for us. Khara came here from Proviso West High School, a suburb and school on the west side of Chicago.

I don't know if many people understand. Her dad is Kenny Norman from the NBA, so Khara does have a lineage. And I recruited Kenny hard to come play for us at Loyola Chicago. He rejected us and went with Coach Henson down at Illinois. But we got to know Kenny very well.

And then Khara was just a great recruit for us and just a tremendous all-around human being. I mean, she was a great student. She was a motherly captain. She took care



of her team very, very well and efficiently as a captain of our team. She had great vision. When you looked at her as an athlete, she didn't look the part of a great athlete, but she had great, great visual athleticism.

She had great hands to catch anything that was thrown at her. She was a great finisher around the basket and just a great joy to be around for the time that we had her here.

So when the question of who of all the players that have been with us, there's been some really, really good players here. Dwayne is in the office there and my bosses, and we kind of threw this around a little bit.

But there was some really, really great players. Allie Quigley. Diana Vines just went into our Hall of Fame. Not Hall of Fame. She's been in our Hall of Fame. Just had her number put up at Wintrust Arena just last week.

Diana Vines is an all-time leading scorer in the history of our program with 2500, 2600 points. Allie Quigley was willing to defer to Khara because Khara came ahead of her. Khara really is the person that brought us into our NCAA Tournament time, if you will.

There's just a lot of reasons why she should be recognized, but the run of tournaments that we got on there for a while of about 18 of them, she was the leader of bringing that back together also.

Just a great young woman and a great person to represent us. I'm really just happy for her. I'm thrilled for the Big East is doing something like this because these young people that have laid the foundation for this league, both on the men's and women's side, definitely do need to be recognized.

Q. In that fourth quarter your team trailed by 15 points, but cut the lead down to six. What does that say about this team's fight they've had all year long?

DOUG BRUNO: They are a great group of -- they've been fighting all year long. They have never given up. They will never give up. They're a great group to coach because of that, and it's just -- as a coach when you respond to that question, yes, you're really proud of them for not giving up and fighting back, but you also want to find the fight in them before we give up the lead so that the lead isn't given up also.

It's a little bit of a double-edged answer. I mean, I'm happy that we fought back. I wish we would have done a few things differently, little detail things differently that would not have let Seton Hall have the lead.

Again, when you study our two teams, we're very, very evenly matched, so this is a very good Seton Hall team. Tony does a really good job. They're fighting for postseason -- to play in the postseason. They have a lot to fight for. So do we. We have pride to fight for, and had we won and got on a three or four-game run here, then we still had a chance to get into postseason play. But you can't get on a four-game run, three-game run, two-game run without a one-game run.

Q. Doug, these kind of questions always come at the end of the season, but how much longer do you want to do this, and how much does the portal and the NIL play into your decision?

DOUG BRUNO: My wife hates the answer that I'm going to give you. She's in the crowd so she's going to have to listen to it. I'm doing this until I get whacked by the big guy or the little guy. The big guy is the guy in the sky, and the little guy is standing in the back of the room. Dwayne is not a little guy, but the athletic director of DePaul does have to take a second to the big guy called God.

Either God is going to whack me or Dwayne is going to whack me, and then I'm going to be done. That's how long I want to do this. All right?

I love doing this. It's not been an easy year for any of us. At the same time it makes you want to start tomorrow. You really want to. I'm getting to the second part of your question.

People my age that have done this this long -- this is my 50th year coaching, all right? My 51st year of work since I graduated from DePaul in '73. But I'm proud to say I'm one of those guys in America that started working when I was 10.

My 51st year of work, my 50th at the post at DePaul University. Why do you want to keep doing this? Because some people that have done this this long don't want any part of NIL and don't want any part of the transfer portal non-sit-out rules. I want to fight to beat it.

We've fought through a lot of different things in our life here at DePaul and coaching women, and I want to see if we can fight -- you hate the I-word in team. You always want to use the we-word. Never the I-word. But because you're asking me about me, I'm going to use the I-word.

I want to see if I can't beat NIL, beat the transfer portal, and out-compete it and put DePaul back where we were just a few short years ago. And we got whacked by COVID. Everybody did, but we got whacked a little bit more than other people, but get us back to where we were. That's

what is in my innards to want to keep this going and why I want to keep it going.

There's three reasons. You have to know why you coach. There's three reasons I love to coach. Number one, the relationships. You develop great relationships with your bosses, with your coaching staff, and with your players, even though right now it's a tough love spot with me and my players at this moment. You do love your players, the relationships.

I love to teach. This is a great -- basketball and coaching is a great opportunity to teach.

Then, thirdly, I love to compete. All right? That's why -- and you have to know why. Every coach has to know why they do this. And those are the three reasons why I love to do this. Relationships, teaching, and the opportunity to compete and loving to compete. That's why I'm doing it.

Again, I'm an old guy, but I'm not an old guy. I mean, I have more fun than most of the people 25 years old, so...

Thanks for covering women's basketball. It means a lot to us, and it's a never-ending fight to get people to cover women's hoops, and it's a great year. I'm not trying to keep -- if Tony is around the corner -- but what Caitlin Clark is doing for American women's basketball is awesome.

But I think it's very important for the people watching women's hoops not to forget about this player called Paige Bueckers, because Paige Bueckers was player of the year just a couple of years ago, and she's getting a little bit lost in the shuffle right now. But that's one really, really special player that we have playing for us right here in the Big East.

I'll leave you with that. We're blessed to have that great player in our league and Caitlin doing what she's doing for the nation. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports