

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Villanova Wildcats

Denise Dillon

Postgame Media Conference



Marquette 50, Villanova 48

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Villanova head coach Denise Dillon.

DENISE DILLON: Well, battle as expected. Congrats to Marquette. A really well-balanced, disciplined team. Knowing the third time we're playing them, we were expecting a battle. Tough finish for us for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Can you speak more of Lucy Olsen's performance? She was making huge plays. She had 22 points, and how has her contributions made your team better all season?

DENISE DILLON: Well, obviously Lucy's impact this year is amazing. It's impressive what she's done from start to finish. Even today knowing she was going to get their best defenders, she was going to get the double teams, and continued just to play through and continued to battle.

Yeah, we rely a lot on her, and she's willing to do everything and anything. So just excited for her growth, her progression, and I think she has a real bright future.

Q. I heard you yelling a couple of times to your team, pass and move. I wonder if you can talk about two parts. Maybe the seven points Marquette held you to in the third quarter, and also that other balance in terms of production from other weapons besides Lucy.

DENISE DILLON: Well, exactly. Pass and move. When you play a continuity of five-out offense, movement is key. Moving the ball, setting screens, keeping that spacing.

And I felt, again, when you're uncertain of who that second, third scorer might be, the ball ends up in Lucy's hands or in Zanai's hands, and they're trying to create something, and

it makes for a long game. We just continue to try to ask them to keep that spacing. Move the ball so we can get shots in the flow as opposed to trying to create them.

Easier said than done when you are on the sideline emphasizing it when they're out on the floor feeling that pressure. Marquette did a great job of switching screens so players didn't feel that they were able to make some of those passes.

But you stick with the system. You continue to focus on that, and down to the very end, you're going to work it.

Q. Obviously this loss leaves your fate as far as the NCAA Tournament in the balance. What do you tell your team? Then, what is your final message to the committee, I guess, as well?

DENISE DILLON: Yeah, it is tough. Every game is huge in the Big East, but it was interesting how it came down to us battling against Marquette in this one.

Big East basketball is tremendous and a great battle, so it would be well represented in the tournament with multiple teams. So you just continue to look at the résumé and think, again, some of the games that we have lost with number of those teams going postseason. They're going to be in the NAAs. Seeing the differential in scoring. All games were single possessions with some.

Yeah, as we just said to the team, this is a tough one to swallow, and you want to continue to advance and put yourself in the best position possible. We're going to rely on not being finished. We'll take a couple of days and get back to practice on Tuesday.

Q. Being the third time that you've played them, was there anything different that you saw from them on either the offensive or defensive side that you didn't see in the first two games?

DENISE DILLON: No. Again, I'm aware that they're going to try to get the ball out of Lucy's hands, so doubling the ball screens, blowing up some of the hand-offs. But, offensively, I think they did a nice job of taking advantage



of mismatch and size advantage with some of the back screen.

Then it wasn't even the initial. It was us being out of rebounding position. They work. They're relentless on the boards. They worked, and they got some put-backs. When you're out of position, you end up fouling. I thought they did a nice job taking advantage there, playing their two bigs.

Typically we don't face that, because we're able to take advantage on the offensive end with our spacing and movement. But today it played into their hands to take advantage of us.

Q. Obviously you chose to honor Harry Perretta as your legend. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about what he means to you personally and to the university.

DENISE DILLON: I appreciate you mentioning that. I actually thought the event was yesterday, so I thought I was going to be able to attend. Realizing it was this morning when we were at shoot-around, I missed it.

Yeah, it's always great to celebrate Harry, who has done so much for women's basketball, for Villanova University, for our program. But me personally, he is the reason why I'm in this position, to have made the decision to go to Villanova and to play for him. And the development process, it's what I take seriously each and every day when I'm working with our players. Teaching the game. Teaching them how to play, how it works, how to learn, and grow within it, and then development.

I had a great opportunity to develop as a player my four years with him, and then an opportunity to coach with him. Getting yourself in the door is not easy in coaching, and to have been handed that opportunity at 22 was unique.

It's never wavered. His commitment to our program continues to grow, and in me as a professional, and those efforts are greatly appreciated. He's a great mentor, but a friend as well.

Q. Obviously shots weren't falling. Especially from deep today.

DENISE DILLON: No.

Q. How do you get your team to overcome that, especially from a mentality perspective when you're not seeing those shots go in?

DENISE DILLON: To be honest, we were just asking to take some 12, 15-foot jumpers. We weren't asking for the

three. That's an area of understanding.

You have to recognize and try to get an easier look, and an easier look isn't a layup. A lot of times they think I have to get into the paint and draw. Nothing is wrong with a midrange game. That's something I just want to emphasize with our team, my teams moving forward.

You can't live and die at the three-point line, because I think more often than not, you'll die out there. So just making those recognitions sooner than later. Continue just to be hopeful and be, like, oh, it's knocking down. No, you have to feel it.

I would have liked to have seen some more 12, 15-foot jumpers as opposed to firing the threes.

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