

# Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

**Marquette Golden Eagles**

**Coach Megan Duffy**

**Liza Karlen**

Postgame Media Conference



Marquette 50, Villanova 48

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Marquette, Head Coach Megan Duffy, student-athlete Liza Karlen.

MEGAN DUFFY: What a game. That felt like the true definition of March Madness. Just the closeness of the game, the back-and-forth effort by both teams.

We had lost the first two games to Nova on some heart-breakers. Different things in both games. We were just so hungry to try to figure out how to beat them.

I can't tell you how proud I am of just my team and their grit and their determination to find a way to win. I mean, Nova and us both like to score a little more than we do -- than we did today. So just to figure out how to rely on our defense and rebounding and make timely plays on the offensive side was tremendous.

THE MODERATOR: Let's start with questions for Liza.

**Q. With both teams going back and forth, back and forth, what were you and your teammates huddling about, telling each other as you are just trying to pull out and pull ahead?**

LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, I think we kept using the word "composure" in the huddles a little bit. Like Coach said, we played Villanova twice this year. Very close both times, so we've been in these situations before.

Everyone on the court was very familiar with what that game was about. So just keeping our heads on, being very tactical with kind of what the refs are calling, how they're scoring. Like I said, staying composed as much as possible.

**Q. Going into those final five seconds of the game, Olsen had the ball. Where was your head at, especially on the court those last five seconds? What were you thinking? What was your game plan?**

LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, I think everyone on the court knew what Villanova was going to do in terms of who they were going to go to. And it's hard because when you're not in the action and you know what's going to happen, you just kind of hope that your teammates are on their game, which they were, and then box out.

I kind of had to just hope that Rose Nkumu and Jordan King had my back on that, and they did, and they pulled through.

**Q. A lot of the game you played double bigs, especially with Skylar. How was it being able to play off her today for so much of that run time?**

LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, Skylar Forbes has worked so hard this whole year to get to the point where she's at right now. I'm super proud to have her as a teammate this year. She's huge for us just as another big inside presence.

Being able to lob passes up to her, she comes down with them every single time. Just that presence defensively, inside she gets a lot of blocks for us. Obviously you saw how big she was on the boards. I mean, that's huge to have another big in there having your back on things like that.

**Q. Congrats on being named to the All Big East team. You've gotten attention in the Big East honor role, nationally. How do you feel your game has improved and what you're proud of this season and from your play?**

LIZA KARLEN: I think that I try to pride myself on being very steady, and my teammates are a huge, huge piece of that through the ups and downs. You miss shots; you make shots. You've never really worried about it because I know my teammates have my back at the end of the day.

This year I've tried to come into every single game with the



same mentality and the same energy, and that's helped me a lot regardless of how many points I score. So I think that's what I'm most proud about for this year.

**Q. Obviously every player loves to score, but how do you keep your head in the game when you shot 33%?**

LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, I think I've always approached it as I can't control the ball going in or not. I can control how confident I am shooting the shots and what my shot selection is. So I work a lot with Coach Duffy and my assistant Coach J. of what shots are good shots and what shots to hunt and what shots might not be the best shots for me to take.

I think going back to that, not necessarily focusing on if the ball goes in or not and just focusing on what I can control when it comes to shot-taking.

THE MODERATOR: Liza, thank you very much. Questions for Coach.

**Q. This being the third time that you've played them, did you see anything different from them offense or defense that you didn't see from them in the first two games?**

MEGAN DUFFY: Well, I think both sides are trying to probably make small adjustments. We had some new things in, and I thought Denise did a great job of trying to counter what we were doing defensively, whether that was slipping a screen or curling. They have so much movement in their five-out. As soon as you make a mistake, they can take advantage of it.

I think one of the keys was Olsen got off to a really hot start right off the bat. And then we settled down and just kept talking about what we were trying to do to make it difficult, which was good for us as the game went on.

She's such a tremendous player, so I think you spend the week actually trying to simplify things. Especially when you've lost two. You can overthink it and focus on a detail that happened back in January, and it doesn't matter when you play in March. So that was one thing, staff down through the players, we really said this has to be one with our defense and rebounding.

We actually talked kind of funny about our effort. Just how our effort had to be a little bit better than it was when we played in Milwaukee and then out in Philly. And I thought with simple things like that, like your effort to go chase down a rebound, your mentality if you don't like a call, whatever it is, just to stay really, really focused on that. And I think that might have been the difference of just

getting that little bit extra.

As silly as it sounds in March, we all want to win and play as hard as we can. But I thought the team was tremendous with staying in that fight, knowing this wasn't -- I mean, we knew coming in this was not going to be -- some team is going to win by a lot or it's not happening with this matchup, so...

**Q. Your program chose to honor Allazia Blockton. I think she graduated just before you.**

MEGAN DUFFY: Yeah.

**Q. Curious if you have any insights on why she was chosen and what she's meant for the program?**

MEGAN DUFFY: Our all-time leading scorer. She's tremendous. I've gotten to know her. Never got to coach her. She graduated my first year when I came in. We actually probably needed her to score a little bit out there for us. She could get a bucket. She was a walking bucket.

I think it's a tremendous thing the Big East is doing to honor some of our legends. She's still a young legend because she's not too far removed. But just somebody that brought so much excitement to Marquette basketball and from the national scene put us on the map a little bit more. Just great she had the opportunity this morning to get recognized and be there behind our bench to watch our team play.

So very exciting just for her and then all the legends.

**Q. You mentioned how close the first two Villanova matchups are, but you've been playing close matchups, from Illinois back in week one. How do you think all those close games prepared you for these big moments in March?**

MEGAN DUFFY: We try and rely on our veterans. When you have somebody like Jordan King, who has been here for five years and Claire Kaifes that came in and then Liza to my left, we try and learn from our mistakes, keep the standard the standard.

I've talked so much about that because you can get so focused on one or two possessions in a game. Sometimes it's not about that. It's about keeping those standards really high of Marquette basketball and figuring out a way to win -- ways to win.

I just think we were very loose with that today from a let's not overthink or analyze every little thing. Let's just make sure we're solid and we can live with whatever happens.

Matchups in the league are interesting. Some teams you play real close and you blow out another. Sometimes this year it hasn't made a lot of sense. We were all tied for third, and we end up with the -- there's a lot of things that don't match up.

But what I do know is we're one of the best teams in the country. Hopefully we'll get to show that tomorrow against Connecticut and then beyond in the NCAA Tournament. I'm proud of the experience we've taken from those past games. Maybe all those really -- other than the two Connecticut games, every game we've lost has been five or six or less points.

At some point you have to learn something, right, either way, and maybe that was the turning point for us today.

**Q. Speaking about the big game tomorrow, what are you going to be telling the team as you go into it, the practices before the game? What's the mentality going to be like?**

MEGAN DUFFY: There's not a lot of practice, so it's about rest and fueling, and just -- we'll obviously have not as many fans as them tomorrow. We'll try. We have nothing to lose. Take the pressure off of us and try to have some fun.

I thought we played some good basketball in the two matchups. But as we know with UConn, they can make runs so fast. We'll have to really make sure we're connected on that that we don't let it go out of hand and stay solid.

At this point you don't have a lot of prep time. You have to kind of turn the page quickly after this one and enjoy this March Madness and the moment of being in the semis. It's really cool just to watch our team put that Marquette on the bracket and know you're playing UConn.

Those are the memories I'm watching these kids have. You kind of have a little bit of chills from back in the day of when you were a player of just, like, God, this is what it's all about. It's not the missed layup. It's not the free-throw you make. It's watching them jump up and down and just be excited to have another day to play.

**Q. With regard to that game tomorrow, you had a close game today. UConn had an emotional game. Aaliyah got injured. How do you approach that, turning the page so quickly? Is there a method to your madness that you maybe learned as player?**

MEGAN DUFFY: I just think you stay steady. Like I said,

it's pretty simple. You get a shower and some food, and you work on the scout a little bit. I think you hit it on the head. You emotionally have to come back down. Whether it's UConn's game or our game, you have to settle yourself back down.

As you play multiple games through the week, like physically you're not going to get any fresher or feel any better that way. It's the opposite. So mentally just focused on the game plan and keeping it simple that way.

**Q. So tomorrow's game it's going to be a deja vu of last season playing UConn, falling to them in the semifinals. Last year UConn scored 16 points off your 17 turnovers. Today you had 17 turnovers on the game. How do you try to rearrange that? How do you try to come off of those 17 turnovers, turn it around for tomorrow?**

MEGAN DUFFY: Yeah, I mean, I don't think about last year. It's a whole different team and season. They are a very, very different team too.

Anything -- when you play them, points off of turnovers are so important. I don't know. It's not necessarily like a number if you have this many, there's a recipe for success. It's about the runs. It's about how they can quickly score off of easy baskets.

Taking care of the ball is always something we talk about, and it's even more important on their kind of home floor with their crowd because this crowd can get into it pretty quickly.

It's more not the number, but just the mentality of let's clean it up a little bit. Yeah, we had some sloppy moments today. The physicality and all that, but we'll watch those a little bit and just remind our team what makes good basketball, and it's taking care of the ball.

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