

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Creighton Bluejays

Coach Jim Flanery

Morgan Maly

Lauren Jensen

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton 72, Seton Hall 65

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Creighton, Head Coach Jim Flanery, student-athletes, Morgan Maly and Lauren Jensen.

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, it's a really good win. I think when the other team has played first, you're always worried about your nerves, even as veteran a team as we have, and we do. I said that there's probably not more than a handful of teams in the country that have played together as much as our group because we've been -- once we got Lauren, we've been together and played a lot together.

I felt like we would eventually settle in, but Seton Hall -- just talking to our two right here, they both said Seton Hall is tough. They fight. They're a really good team. To beat them three times, and the score tonight was the exact same score that we beat them by on Sunday. So pretty representative of how good they are.

Really proud of our group. We weren't perfect. We had that stretch in the first half where we couldn't defend the three, and I thought they got confident. Then at that point you knew it was going to be a 40-minute game.

I thought Morgan was terrific on the glass again. She had 12 rebounds, I think, against them on Sunday, and she got some big defensive rebounds.

Obviously both these guys scored the ball really well. Lauren had some really big takes late. Win and move on. I'm really thankful that we're not in the 9:30 slot with that extra two and a half hours for players and staff.

That's the benefit -- that's why we work so hard to be the 2

instead of the 3 is we get that extra time.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Another nail-biter against Seton Hall in the Big East Tournament Quarterfinal. Once again you're coming out alive. How does it feel to be alive and be able to advance in the semifinals?

MORGAN MALY: I can't complain. I think going into this game, we knew from playing them the past three years, playing them in the Big East Tournament is tough. They're going to give it their all, and they make adjustments like Flan said, like no other team late in the season.

I'm just proud that we made adjustments throughout the game and stuck together.

Q. LJ, you had that massive run to start the fourth quarter. What's running through your head as you break the huddle and then again after you make that transition layoff of Mal's steal?

LAUREN JENSEN: I think just trying to separate going into the fourth quarter. We had ten more minutes, and then just making reads. I mean, Flan, he drew up a play for me, and we were able to build off of that and get some momentum.

Q. After this win tonight, then you'll play the winner of the game coming up. What's that mentality like that you're going to get one more game, hopefully one more game, and how do you keep that mentality and that mental toughness?

MORGAN MALY: I think just rely on our experience. It's hard finishing a game late at night, and you kind of have to calm down, soak it in tonight, but then get ready tomorrow. And the coaching staff will do a good job of preparing us, but really relying on experience in the postseason.

Q. Coach Bozzella was up here, and he called Mogensen not just one of the best point guards in the Big East, but one of the best point guards in general. How important is her leadership and her toughness on this team?



LAUREN JENSEN: It's huge. Honestly, I think Molly is one of the most underrated players. She's so big for us. She holds us together. If we didn't have Molly, we would not be the team that we are. She can defend. She rebounds. She passes and scores. Especially in really big moments when we need a big bucket, she'll always be there.

Yeah, she's an awesome teammate too, so I can't say enough good things about her.

Q. Morgan, you missed your first three of four free-throws, and after that you were perfect from the stripe. That was a real difference-maker down the stretch. How did you flip that switch?

MORGAN MALY: Stick to practice. I know that I'm a good shooter. Just didn't get the ball to fall the right way. So I was just sticking with my repetitions.

And I think our team, especially Jayme came in late in the fourth quarter and hit those big free-throws, and I think watching her do that and then me getting my opportunities at the line, it gave me a lot of confidence.

Q. Kiani back in the lineup seemed to give you guys a really big energy lift in the first half. How good was it to have her back?

LAUREN JENSEN: It's so fun to have her back on the court. She's energy off the bench. Again, great teammate. She'll make the right play. I know she's young, but she's super smart.

She plays within her role, and it's huge to have her back in the postseason.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, obviously fourth time in four years playing Seton Hall in the quarterfinals. How unique of a challenge is it to game plan for the same team four years in a row when your core has stayed relatively the same?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, I think it helped that we had just played them on Sunday. It probably helped them that they had just played us on Sunday because there's not a lot of new -- we tweaked a couple of things. We said, hey, we can be better. They were a little bit more intentional about doing this or that, but it's so fresh. That was a competitive game.

Yeah, they're tough to prepare for. I think they do a good

job, Morgan alluded to it, of adjusting. I think Tony is a great risk taker. He will play somebody that you don't expect, or he'll run -- he'll find something that works offensively, and they're creative defensively.

I think they are hard for us to score against because they're -- I think they put together good game plans and they're just tough. They're a really good team. They're net is in the 60s. You look at their body of work. It's pretty good.

I just think the history of playing them four years in a row, you know, our players know that they're good enough to beat us, but there's a lot of respect there. Because I think our players know we're going to have to be really gritty to win. We don't have to be perfect, but we're going to have to be really gritty and fight for 40 minutes or in one case, 45, to beat them.

Q. When you're looking at the Big East as a whole, you've been ranked, Marquette has been ranked, UConn. What do you feel the strength of the conference will be as they select their teams for the Big Dance?

JIM FLANERY: Sure. I love our league. I think it's a challenge. I mean, every coach sits up here and says that we beat each other up and this and that, but I just think there is a lot of great players, great coaches.

I'm pretty hopeful that Marquette is a lock after winning today. UConn is going to be a high seed. Villanova is right on the bubble, but had the ball fallen a little bit differently for Seton Hall in a couple of close non-con losses and conference losses, that's a team that would -- I think in terms of the eye test, I think that's an NCAA Tournament team, but their résumé probably doesn't necessarily give them that opportunity. Hopefully they'll be in the WBIT and some more teams.

Yeah, it's fun. It's challenging. It's exhilarating. It's not fun sometimes just because it's stressful, but I guess that's what you like when you are a competitor, and we have a great group to kind of go into battle with.

Q. You've had a lot of struggles with teams that do pressure you really hard with UConn and even the Seton Hall team at points. How did you keep the turnovers down today? Single digits especially against this Seton Hall team is really good.

JIM FLANERY: We were solid today in that area. I thought we had a couple late and a couple of moving screens, but other than that, I thought we were really tight.

I mean, these guys talked about Molly. I think as much as



she played to have zero turnovers. Emma is a great ball handler for a post player. We put a lot of pressure on her to be a ball handler, decision maker, and that, I think, helps us, but experience obviously matters.

Even though I don't consider Mal a ball handler, she's usually a low-mistake player. Morgan kind of the same thing. I think a lot of it is experience and having played together and being able to connect passes.

Yeah, eight turnovers was huge today because defensively we had some stretches where we weren't as good as we needed to be, but we didn't have the live ball turnovers that we had the last time we played them. We had some live ball turnovers where they got some transition baskets off of bad offense.

I thought that was big.

Q. Coach Bozzella in his press conference said the biggest factor for your team coming on top was the experience and the togetherness that you had. A lot of your players have been here for three, four years. Do you agree with that sentiment that that was the real big X-factor because you've been in these kind of situations so many times?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, that was the meat of my pregame speech. Because, like I said, I think early in a game like tonight, the advantage goes to the team that played the night before. I think they get the nerves out. They've been on the court. They're maybe just tired enough to not be quite as amped.

Even with a veteran team, you're a little bit nervous about that, and then you're playing a really good team on top of that. Like I said, there can't be more than a few teams in the country that have played as many minutes together as Lauren and Morgan and Emma and Molly. Those guys have been on the floor together in games and big games and conference tournaments and NCAA Tournaments. That's invaluable.

I mean, we for sure have flaws in our team. Anybody who watched that game can see that, but I do think we fight together, and we kind of know who we are. Morgan knows what Emma's strengths are and vice versa, and we all know what LJ can do and Molly. I think that's a huge piece of the success that we hope to have in the postseason here.

Q. Emma got into really quick foul trouble, but still came up with two steals, nine rebounds. Talk about her impact even when she wasn't scoring and she had to kind of back off a bit in the second half?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, I mean, you trust her because she's such a good player, and she's very smart. I played her the whole fourth quarter because I know how good she is. There's just a trust level in terms of her IQ and her experience.

Yeah, she got knocked pretty good and fell pretty good. I didn't know if she could even shoot the free-throws, but she stepped up and knocked them down. Like you said, she had some big rebounds and what she did late was super impactful.

She's really not normally foul-prone, but yeah, I just think, to your point, she didn't score the ball, but her handprints were on the game in a normal Emma kind of fashion.

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