

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

St. John's Red Storm

Coach Joe Tartamella

Postgame Media Conference



Georgetown 53, St. John's 44

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from St. John's, Head Coach Joe Tartamella.

JOE TARTAMELLA: Yeah, listen, congratulations to Georgetown. I thought they really did a great job. They did the same thing to us a couple of weeks ago, and obviously we didn't do enough to be ready for the game.

They've done an incredible job under the circumstances, so I want to congratulate them and Darnell in what they've done through their year.

Yeah, listen, at the end of the day, the stats don't lie in the game. We knew it would be an issue if we gave up too many points in the paint, and obviously from a rebounding standpoint. But they just took it to us, I thought, and we didn't really respond in the way that we've done all year. That part is frustrating.

At the same time, I know that we've got more games to play, so the fact that we have the ability to play meaningful games in March with this group from where we started, I think is a pretty incredible journey for them. I'm really proud of what they've done.

To finish with an opportunity to be the 3 seed in this league is really difficult. And so when you look at our season and our team as a whole, they've continued to surprise, and I think put themselves in the position that they were in. And if you asked us in November where we would be, I don't know if we would be thinking we would have a chance to be in the postseason.

So I think they've done a great job in putting us there. As I told them in the locker room, look, the way that they've played all year, especially after Christmas, they deserve to be where they were.

Credit to Georgetown and how they played. They just did a better job. They outplayed us. They out-coached us. They did it all.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What is it specifically about Seton Hall's defensive attack or defensive scheme? I know February 20th, they held you to 43. Today 44 points. Is it anything in particular? Is it matchups?

JOE TARTAMELLA: No, I mean, look -- Georgetown, I think, is who we got, Pam. So I think that's what you meant. I got you.

Q. Sorry. Long day.

JOE TARTAMELLA: I understand. Us too.

But, yeah, they just play hard. They did a good job with their pressure. We had worked for the time that we had off since our last game in doing all the things they did to us, and we just didn't respond. That's frustrating.

They have the ability to run in a number of players. They have size. You've got a defensive player of the year on the floor who can dictate a lot of the game at times. And they made more shots. You know, they made more shots than we did, and even some of the ones that were maybe more difficult.

I just thought they were more forceful in what they did. They're playing certainly with a pretty strong belief right now, which I think is a credit to them.

Yeah, I just think that when we struggle, our point guards struggle to play in the game or we struggle on the glass. So we had a lot of holes this year that we were able to kind of plug at times. I think that's why I'm so proud of our staff and the players that we have that put us in this position.

I don't think it's anything we didn't think was coming. Let's put it that way. We didn't match the intensity level or the level of acumen to be able to do the things we worked on.



Q. As you were saying at the beginning of the season, you really didn't know where you would be right now. After the long and grueling season, can you speak to the heart and soul of your team and what you have learned from them?

JOE TARTAMELLA: Well, without going into it, I think I learned a lot about the power of one in one way or the other and just watching our team transform by who you have around you. It's an amazing thing.

To watch a player -- when you talk about heart and soul and you look at the team and how we have to play. You know, you look at a kid like Unique Drake, who she struggled tonight. It's not a secret. She struggled. But for a kid who has been with me for five years, has given me everything that she has, stayed with the program through good times and even hard times, whether it be tough seasons or even through COVID, she's one of those things that when you put it in a category of heart and soul, she's one of them. You don't get that chance to coach players for that long period of time and probably won't again.

I just think that we breed a certain level of toughness in our program that we expect, and today we didn't meet it, but I think that's what's carried us through the better part of the season.

These kids have played since August. We went overseas, played in Europe. They've heard my voice for too long. We played whatever Tuesday it was ago. We have 11 days off before a conference tournament, which I think is unheard of.

So we come off a big win against Marquette. We're trying to get ready for that. We had two areas of compression in the schedule that we fought through. These kids don't have to prove anything to me. I don't think they have to prove anything to anybody else either. Regardless of what the record is in the conference, I told them in the locker room, I haven't had too many teams that have finished as a 3 seed.

I don't think that should be unheralded. I watch these games all the time, and they talk about the teams that are below us and around us and not about us. I do think they deserve some credit, along with the rest of the league. The league is really hard. That's why everybody should be talking about.

When you look down and look at these games right now, look at the games. Seeds don't matter. It doesn't matter at this time of year. I think the coaches who have come into the league -- and I've been in this league now as a kid at 22 and now I'm almost -- I don't even know how old I am --

45 maybe. 44. Thank you.

So I have a lot of pride in what the league is about. I have a lot of pride in the players that have played here and the history of the league and for the game of women's basketball. This is coming from somebody whose sister was a great player, and that's how I got into the game.

So for me it's been really exciting to carry the torch on from when Kim was here and gave me an opportunity. And Kathy being here and Mike and everyone who has been with me. And Kristin is back.

Our league is filled with great coaches, and I think even this year, you're seeing an infusion of energy in some of those programs, which I think is massive for us -- a lot of the programs that have been stayers in kind of that upper half.

It's a chore, man. You've got to really be on your game, and we got beat today. So I think the league is moving in the right direction. We have a lot of teams that I think are worthy of playing in the postseason, so we'll see how that goes. Couldn't be prouder of where we are within that.

Coming off last year, you're losing six players that were legitimate starters, scorers, 70% of your offense. There's a million things that you have to figure out, which we have to do again anyway. Probably will do it every year.

I mean, I couldn't tell you how proud I am of them. Like I said, it's been a long haul, but I'm excited that we still have more games to play. Or I believe we should.

Q. Your team didn't score a layup in the first 27 minutes of the game. You only got four of them off. What did they do schematically to keep your team out of the interior?

JOE TARTAMELLA: Yeah, if that's true, you're telling me something I didn't really know. If we didn't score a layup in 27 minutes, that's interesting. But if we didn't, if that's actually a true statement, then not that hard to figure out either.

We were really, for whatever reason, trying to take shots that were harder than the ones that were actually open. So for me it was more of, hey, just be forceful, be able to get the ball out. But we missed shots that -- you know, they put pressure on us. We sped up a little bit maybe. Those were probably some of the ones that probably we missed, I would say.

Again, if I look at a couple of games that we lost, they're there too. When we've struggled, that's been a problem.

When we've been successful for the most part, we're there.

No, I don't think there's any -- the schematic was pressure-out, right? So it's hard to get it inside and be able to force us to go away from the basket, which is why you're not seeing probably as many in the lane, which is why the points in the paint were what they were.

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