

# Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

## Georgetown Hoyas Coach Darnell Haney Graceann Bennett

Postgame Media Conference



Georgetown 53, St. John's 44

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Georgetown, Head Coach Darnell Haney, student-athlete Graceann Bennett.

DARNELL HANEY: Again, I know it's late. Thank you, you guys, so much for staying here to talk to us and to talk to this young woman because she was amazing tonight.

I got on her a little bit about finishing today. She looked at me with those puppy dog eyes, and I'm, like, it was go time, and she was just amazing tonight. Just finishing around the rim, defensively. She just did a great job for us. I'm proud of her, and I'm proud of all of our girls.

I think one of the biggest things that we harp on every single day is making sure we lock in on our defensive principles and the defensive game plan. We wanted to make sure that we kind of took St. John's out of the things they wanted to do.

They have a really good player in Drake and another really good player in Archer. We wanted to make sure everything was tough for them, and I think our group kind of flustered them a little bit and we were able to get the win.

I'm happy for us to go get the win, but it's tournament time, man, so it's next day, next play.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Graceann.

**Q. Including your big game tomorrow, can you speak of what it's like being on the big stage for three games in a row? How does it feel just knowing the world is watching you?**

GRACEANN BENNETT: We tend to approach every day

the same way in this program. Every practice, lift, film session, game, no matter the size of the stage. So it feels pretty normal, and that's a huge credit to how we prepare. We work really hard in practice so that in the game, thinking and being in the moment is really easy.

It's been a joy to just be present and enjoy it and be here with good competition and great teammates.

**Q. I want to say congratulations on the two-time Sportsmanship Award. I want to acknowledge that.**

GRACEANN BENNETT: Thank you.

**Q. Today you came out with a different mindset. You guys set the tone early. You ended up with 16 points, and I just wonder kind of the mindset of the team. Because you jumped St. John's early with that big first quarter lead. What were you kind of thinking of?**

GRACEANN BENNETT: We knew we had a quick turnaround with our scout, given the nature of the tournament, and that we needed to switch our mindset from Xavier to pack the paint, play really solid defense, know where Drake was, and do our tactical strategies that we always do. Play our Georgetown defense.

That's really what our game plan was, was to be us and finish plays on offense, like Coach said. We made that happen, and it started on the defensive end.

**Q. Y'all really hang your hat on the defensive end of the ball. Can you talk about the culture, the communication, everything that goes into that maybe we don't see just watching the games?**

GRACEANN BENNETT: It started for us in the summer and fall. Coach Haney was teaching us our own language, and that's what we use to communicate on defense to make our calls, to talk to each other. It's specific to only us.

He said this before, but if you come in our gym, you won't know what we're talking about, and we love it that way. That comes with a lot of preparation, a lot of reps, just



taking every practice seriously, and getting fluent in our defense so that it's easy in the game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We appreciate your time. Questions for Coach.

**Q. In your regular season meeting with Creighton, it was a really tough game. You lost by five. Can you speak to how you're going to have the team, their mentality, tomorrow, physically and mentally just knowing how good they are?**

DARNELL HANEY: Yeah, Creighton is a really good team. They shoot the ball really well. Again, like Graceann talked about, now we've got to switch our mind frame on defense and on offense again. Because Creighton is a totally different team than St. John's, so we have to make sure we switch our mind frame defensively and offensively so that we are prepared to guard and prepared to attack Creighton.

In this situation we have to make sure we are -- like right now, it's tournament time. It's not about the running, and it ain't about the practice. It's about mental preparation. It's about being mentally prepared and mentally locked in to do the things you need to do to be successful. That takes a lot of film. That takes having a foundation already so that we can just switch it like that.

I just think we're prepare to play a good team, right? But Creighton knows -- and I think Creighton knows that we're a good team too, so we have to make sure that we're prepared to go out and perform and go out and do things the Georgetown way. We'll be just fine.

**Q. Stylistically you really controlled this game, kept the pace down, kept it low-scoring. How were you able to do that?**

DARNELL HANEY: I just think it's who we are, man. We want to impose our will on what we're doing in the game. We don't want you to dictate what we do. We want to make sure we're dictating, and we feel like we can do that defensively.

Those are the people we have. We just got some great kids that listen, that do things the way they're supposed to be done. And I just think the way they've been able to buy in, the way they've been able to get through adverse times, at times all over the place, I just think this group has done a great job.

But then, also, I should have said this at the beginning, all the glory goes to God, man. He just puts these young women in positions where they listen, they're attentive. He

blessed them with the situations and the ability that they have. I'm just proud of them. They just do a great job, but all the glory goes to God. This is amazing.

They've been able to get to the semifinals in the Big East Tournament. I'm just a kid from Miami. I used to dribble the basketball a mile to go play basketball. I used to dribble it a mile. I used to wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning, and I'm dribbling the basketball. And my parents are, like, Put that ball up.

Now we're in the semifinals of the Big East Tournament. I'm just proud of them, man. I'm proud of our group.

**Q. How has the energy changed in the locker room these past two days just pulling off the win yesterday, but especially tonight pulling off this big upset?**

DARNELL HANEY: The energy in the locker room is the same. We bring it. And that starts with me. We're going to bring it every day. We're going to bring the energy every single day. And then it goes to my staff, and then those kids bring it. They have to. It's what we do. It's who we are.

If you're not doing that and you're not bringing energy every day, you don't belong, right? Positive energy. Positive energy. I really, really hang our hats on that, because we feel like positive energy, positive talk, positive action brings a positive life. Tonight we were able to get a positive result.

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