

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 10, 2024

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Marquette Golden Eagles

Coach Megan Duffy

Postgame Media Conference



UConn 58, Marquette 29

MEGAN DUFFY: Congratulations to UConn. I thought they were tremendous defensively. We felt some momentum and confidence coming into this game, catching a break a little bit with Edwards being out, but just could never find our rhythm offensively.

Q. What did UConn do specifically to compensate for Aaliyah being out? Did they give you some different look that maybe you weren't expecting? What did they show?

MEGAN DUFFY: No, I think the way their guards can get up and pressure and blow up some of your offense, I think that's always been when they're at their best, what it looks like.

I thought as much as we didn't have turnovers in the first half, we only had two, just we didn't have a lot of rhythm and flow. I thought we were a little bit just unsure with our reads. I thought we had open shots and just couldn't see it. Then when we got them, weren't able to make them. It was kind of a weird game. There was a lot of airballs and shots coming off the rim for both teams at times.

I just thought their pressure -- they've been switching all year with a lot of screening stuff and I thought they did a really nice job with that. And then Paige was obviously tremendous, just consistent, and taking advantage of every single one of our mistakes on the defensive end.

I thought we could still make a little bit of a run after halftime, and just for whatever reason, it went the wrong direction.

Q. With all the huge competition in the Big East this year, now that the tourney is done, can you speak to -- do you think your team has made a strong enough case to the selection committee to be in the big

dance?

MEGAN DUFFY: Absolutely. I think we're deserving of being in the NCAA Tournament. Our body of work, 23 wins for our program, non-conference went out and beat Illinois, who was preseason ranked, Arkansas, Boston College, consistently put up good net numbers all year. Obviously Connecticut has not been nice to us all year, which happens to a lot of teams, I guess.

Then for us, the losses we had in conference were all by five, six points or less. So again, tough losses, teams that obviously really know you well.

But I think setting us up for the tournament, I think we got a great veteran group. I think they have a style that's tricky to guard.

I think our body of work and just the consistency of what we've done this year makes us very worthy.

Q. What exactly is it that makes Paige so difficult? She just seemed to weave through so many players and get up the shots she wanted.

MEGAN DUFFY: When you lose Edwards for today, you know where they're going. You know she's going to take probably a few more shots. You know how dangerous she can be. We tried to get out and hedge and pressure a little bit more and make her become a passer. What I thought she was really good at was getting downhill before we even got to the ball screen at times.

I know Coach is always preaching to them about their movement, and I thought she just was completely under control the entire game. That's how she's always been. That's why she's so good.

I know I'm biased; I think she's if not one of the best players, top two in the country, just because of how she impacts a game and makes other people better.

She's so fluid. Yesterday we played Olsen, and the way she changes pace and dribbles all the time is a little bit different because they're still big-time scorers. But she



does it with less dribbles and the way she can pass the ball and her supporting cast.

It's just phenomenal to see -- not being on the other side of it, obviously today -- but the way she just orchestrates their offense and timely plays. You can watch her in the middle of the game give confidence to her teammates just by being poised and versatile.

She's tremendous, and then her rebounding -- you think about this, she's playing huge minutes. She doesn't get much of a break.

It's even more respectable what she's doing with that.

Q. Considering the loss today, and I'm pretty sure postseason play is in your future right around the corner, are you concerned about the players? Sometimes when you get a loss like this, it might take the wind out of your team, but then sometimes you might go back and look at it and say this is further motivation for us to get better coming into postseason play.

MEGAN DUFFY: Yeah, I think this game is such a -- every year we're in this, you know, four or five, and playing -- I mean, every year I've been in the league -- the first year wouldn't count -- we play them three times. It's really difficult. We've clipped them off one time, and the other ones have been really difficult.

It's just different than some of the other teams in our league. We'll be ready to go. I think the great thing, we have spring break here coming up, so we'll give the girls a few days off and mentally, physically take a little bit of a break.

This is the fun time where you just get practice with no opponent. It's like a coach's dream. So just getting them better, getting them hungry, work on obviously some of the things that didn't go well today.

Hopefully the players will feel the same way, but it's awesome for a coach when you get a little bit more time just to be with them and extra time with a Jordan King and some of your vets. I'm confident we'll be okay.

Q. How did you guys prepare for a player like Brady that you haven't seen a ton of on film or in games this year, and how did you feel like she and Liza kind of navigated that matchup?

MEGAN DUFFY: Yeah, I think they've been trying to get Brady ready to go for more minutes. I think with their system, though, she just played her role. She kept the ball

moving. She got into their little flip hand-off. She ball screened. I thought her defense was really good, just big and physical behind Liza.

She's why they're the best program in college basketball history, because those kids are ready to step up.

They fought so much adversity this year. Even what Geno has done with all the injuries earlier in the season, to kind of transform with those young kids. I know I try and take a little bit of a lesson anytime to learn how you get your kids to step up differently, and I thought she was great. She didn't have to do too much, just be solid, and sometimes that's good enough with the other players around you.

Q. You've been around the game for a while as a player and as a coach. Can you remember a time that there's the excitement there is right now for women's basketball across the board? The great players, the great teams, it seems there's a different feel this year than there's been that I can remember.

MEGAN DUFFY: The old saying, if you invest in it, people will come, whether that's monetarily, whether that's getting people in the stands. I just think the star power is at its best.

I just can't believe even in our gym, too, back in Milwaukee, just the little kids who are coming out, boys and girls who are just obsessed with our players and just want their autographs. So small moments like that, whether it's Paige and people traveling hundreds of miles or Caitlin Clark, to see them or maybe get a picture, it's phenomenal.

Hopefully when Caitlin and Paige move on to the WNBA, we'll have the next wave of stars coming in, and we don't stop the momentum.

Just even on the micro level where we are out in the Midwest, it's getting there. And they love Jordan King and they love Liza Karlen, Kenzie -- like, you can't believe it.

I'm so happy to be a part of it. And so even when you have a day like today where you're just like, golly, you know, you're not happy, just to see again the UConn fans come out and support their program. And if we can keep it contagious, keep pumping the money into it, keep celebrating those women who have deserved it for decades, I think we're in a really good place.

Q. Out of the two games in this entire weekend, what will you take going into postseason, and just in general, what do you take from this weekend?

MEGAN DUFFY: The highest of highs and the lowest of



lows. I was just thrilled about our win yesterday. Nova had our number a little bit. But just the way we figured out how to win, and defensively we were really good. And then we were confident coming in today, and sometimes of game of basketball doesn't turn out the way you want it.

Like I answered before, we'll reset ourselves, get some rest. I love my team. There's some interesting stats on here. We'll probably rip up the stat sheet and not worry about it. We probably broke some records for the wrong reason.

I think there's a lot of things to be proud about with this team. Some of the internal stuff when kids are banged up, and things that we try not to publicly talk about just to keep it in house, we battled through a lot. So to get 23 wins and the consistency, we have a lot to be proud of, and we'll build that momentum this week.

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