

# Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

**St. John's Red Storm**

**Coach Joe Tartamella**

**Ber'Nyah Mayo**

**Skye Owen**

Postgame Media Conference



St. John's 66, Butler 50

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by St. John's head coach Joe Tartamella, student-athletes Ber'Nyah Mayo and Skye Owen. We'll open up with a statement from coach and go to questions for the student-athletes first.

JOE TARTAMELLA: I thought a really gritty effort from our group. The first half really didn't go our way. When I say our way, we didn't play well. But I thought we grinded enough to stay in the game. Then you feel good as you are going into the half, and then we foul a kid shooting a three falling away, so we lose a little momentum there.

But I thought the way we started the third, the third quarter obviously swung the game. Then I thought we finished beautifully in terms of making more shots. And that's what it came down to. You know, we gave up 24 points in the paint in the first half, and they made one three for the game.

So it really didn't make a lot of sense if we were going to let them beat us from the inside. And we gave them six points in the paint in the second half. So we did a much better job.

I think in terms of how Phoenix and Kylie played inside -- working on Jaynes is a difficult matchup for a lot of teams and us as well. I thought our pressure then intensified as the game went on, and I thought that also changed it. So I thought we did a better job of kind of adjusting. We really adjusted out of the half well.

Really pleased. These guys deserved it. They've been playing this way for a while, you know, which is fun to watch at times. But I thought our pressure really bothered

them at the end, points off turnovers. I don't think we had a turnover in the second half, which is pretty wild.

Obviously we'll get ready for tomorrow as we face one of the best teams in the country.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Coach, when you say pressure intensified, what was missing from that pressure in the first half for your team, especially on defense?**

JOE TARTAMELLA: I just think the fact that we were kind of allowing them to do what we wanted. They were pushing up on us. They were taking away our space. And so I thought we were able to do that in a much better way in the second half. I think that comes from, hey, now you're making some baskets, and you are starting to make people speed up a little bit.

I thought Shae did a really good job in making it a problem for a couple of their players. We were more locked in. We started pushing them out of their spots. We were able to dictate a little bit better where we wanted the ball to go, who we wanted the ball to go to, which then turned into probably more points than I would have expected. But points that we needed because we have to manufacture in any way that we can.

Then I thought we made some really good rotations that I haven't seen in a while, so I was pleased with that too.

**Q. Speaking of points, Ber'Nyah led all scorers today with 16 points to finish. What did you see from her effort offensively of just her ability to continue to go up for shots?**

JOE TARTAMELLA: I'm sorry. I missed the whole question. Sorry. Ber'Nyah, you going to answer that?

BER'NYAH MAYO: I would just say playing under control and getting to my points and taking my time and finishing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for Coach at the end. Student-athletes first.



**Q. Skye, how would you break down what changed in the second half of this game and how you guys were able to not just pull it out, but really take control of the game?**

SKYE OWEN: I think how Coach Tartamella said, our defense really intensified, and we started to bring it together and get stops. I feel like that helped us transition over to offense as well.

**Q. Ber'Nyah, you've got close to 80 points combined the last four games. You're a senior. You're a veteran. What's your mindset right now for this basketball team, and how much are you trying to just make the most of the March moments?**

BER'NYAH MAYO: I would just say win or go home, honestly. We have nothing else -- there's nothing to lose. At this point, you just have to give it your all.

**Q. This is for both players. Can you guys tell me the story of how Shae Dwyer found out she was Big East Defensive Player of the Year.**

BER'NYAH MAYO: We have film. It was afternoonish. We went through a couple of clips, and then we found out she was on second team. Then we clapped it out and everybody was getting ready to go. Then, wait, one more thing. Then there was a slide show, and they had it up there for her.

**Q. What makes her the best defender in the Big East?**

BER'NYAH MAYO: She never stops.

SKYE OWEN: Yeah.

BER'NYAH MAYO: She gets stops. She never stops moving. She's mad fast.

**Q. What have you guys learned from her with getting your defensive games better?**

BER'NYAH MAYO: She's up there pressuring, and it's only right for me to follow along behind her and feed off her energy.

SKYE OWEN: I feel like she brings a lot of energy. When you see her up, it's, like, okay, get up. You know what I'm saying?

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll take questions for Coach.

**Q. With Ber'Nyah's effort today, leading all scorers, what energy did she bring really to the team especially maybe in the first half where you guys were kind of struggling to get back in it?**

JOE TARTAMELLA: I think she played a little more under control. The same with her, and even Shae, is their balance. We played way too off balance on shots. So I thought she did a better job of getting off two feet, less dribbling, eliminating some of the slippage.

She's had an interesting year. I mean, one of my favorite kids that I've had and I've only had her two years. Obviously as you get picked preseason and maybe you don't get to play to the potential that you wanted to and feel that at the end. I think there's a part of her that still wants to play and show and be able to lead our team in whatever that capacity means moving forward. If we're done, we're done. She can decide what she wants to do to play after.

She gets hurt in August and had surgery and has to come all the way back. She was the one veteran that we really had returning from our year prior.

I thought the end of the year last year she was playing as good as any guard in the country, and I mean that. Then obviously she had a little setback in the summer.

I'm proud of where she is. She's got a lot that she has to handle. The good part was we kind of were at least able to get her a break at moments. So I've been really proud of her effort and what she's done here coming from UMass where she played in a lot of high-leverage games.

**Q. To shut them down defensively the way you did in the fourth quarter, you held them to six points. What was it that led you guys to stringing stops together and finding a way to really take control of the game?**

JOE TARTAMELLA: I think when you are able to score and pressure a little bit more and take some time off the clock and you're not guarding for the full shot clock, I think it helps. I thought we were much more locked in on what they were running. I think our guys did a really good job of preparing them.

I just think that we kept them out of the lane. We were able to push them out further and keep them out of the lane from where they wanted to go. I thought we crunched the floor a little bit better. So I think that was a huge part of it.

We didn't turn the ball over for points. Our rebounding has to be better. Bottom line, it's got to be better. Yeah, I think once we got the lead and we were kind of holding them back and they weren't making shot after shot -- we must

have had a couple of kills in there of, like, three stops in a row where you're kind of taking their will a little bit. So that was the goal. Thankfully we were able to do it enough.

**Q. You mentioned some of the things you've done well down the stretch. I'm just wondering, how are you a different team than when you played at Connecticut a month ago? I have a follow-up question after that. How are you different now, better perhaps, than you were when you played at Connecticut last month?**

JOE TARTAMELLA: Yeah. We didn't play Connecticut would be one of them in the last couple of games. Not to be too funny, Carl.

No. We've taken care of the ball better. Connecticut takes you out of things, right? I thought we did a much better job in the first game with Connecticut than we did in the second.

How are we better? I think we've got to find a way to make more shots. We let a lot of those -- I think we let Fudd take the -- Fudd was outscoring us for like the whole game at some point. I think we're maybe a little more confident, but they can take your confidence real quick.

So I like that we have -- the way we've competed, I think, is different now than maybe we were a month ago in terms of each possession. I think that's the biggest difference, right?

You get to the postseason, and you are getting towards the end of the year, it's never more important to win each possession, whether it's offense or defense. You can't give away opportunities, and we did it today in the first half.

We did not do a good job of that in that game a month ago. And a month ago we were probably in a little bit of a funk. But also you're playing a team that I think is probably as good as they've been in a while in terms of Connecticut.

**Q. Second part is, I don't know how many kids you have left from the team that beat Connecticut two years ago with, but a lot of times beating Connecticut is something mental as much as physical. How can you convince your team that you can beat them tomorrow because your season is on the line?**

JOE TARTAMELLA: Look, it's funny that you ask me that. I told them in the locker room, and this is my view. We have people that think differently. I think it's a great opportunity when you have a team like Connecticut in our league. I don't think it's a bad thing. I've said it for 22 years that I've been in the league back to 2002. They were writing articles about, is it okay, is it good for UConn to be

in the Big East back in whatever it was.

So I want people who want to play here, who want to play against Connecticut, who want to beat them, who want to come in this league and be a part of something that's special. I don't want to shy away from it, and they might beat us by 75, but I told those guys in the locker room, you have to come out and play and compete and then you have to leave it out there and make it feel right, make it look right, and make it sound right. That's what matters.

Our league is based upon, yes, we have great coaches, and we need great players, but we also need to have the ability to play against the people who are the best in the country. So that's an important thing to me. It's been my whole life.

I've spent time in the league when it was Louisville, West Virginia, Notre Dame, Rutgers, Hall of Fame coaches down the line. I learned more in those ten years than I learned in my entire career because of what I was exposed to. People who want to come and play here will be exposed to that. They can compete against that, and they elevate everything that we do.

I think that's the important thing that we have to understand, not only just as competitors, but as coaches and as a league. That's the stuff that gets me going. I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. Kind of do, but you don't, right? Like, you got to go play.

How would you want not to play in this place sold out? It makes no sense to me whatsoever. So, anyway, I actually said that to them, which is funny that you asked that, so I appreciate the question.

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