

# Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

**Xavier Musketeers**

**Coach Billi Chambers**

**Aizhanique Mayo**

**Meri Kanerva**

Postgame Media Conference



Xavier 80, DePaul 73

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Xavier, Head Coach Billi Chambers, student-athletes, Aizhanique Mayo and Meri Kanerva. Opening statement from Coach.

BILLI CHAMBERS: I just wanted to send well wishes to Doug Bruno and just talk about how incredible of a job that Jill did taking over with such a difficult time of trying to pull that team together. She did an incredible job with them.

Obviously I'm incredibly proud of our group and the poise and confidence that they came out with not having a lot of experience in this moment, but just playing with a sense of joy and a sense of passion and just wanting to get it done for each other.

Then the composure that they kept obviously giving up a big lead and allowing them to come back and riding it out and finishing it out. I'm super proud of this group and excited for them to have this opportunity to take that win there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Aizhanique, I'll start with you. How did you two feed off each other to have this kind of day? Did you know when you woke up this morning it was going to be this type of day?**

AIZHANIQUE MAYO: It felt like a great feeling at least waking up this morning and going to shoot-around and being active this morning. But as far as piggybacking off each other, it feels great. This is what we wanted in order for us to get our Big East win in the Big East tournament.

**Q. Meri, what about you?**

MERI KANERVA: I would say I feel like we all knew that we have something to show, and we came up strong and showed that we can win games too. I feel like Nique already said, it's March, so it's time to play.

**Q. I guess along those lines, to you, Aizhanique, it's March. Coach told us yesterday, 0-0 heading into this week. You make a statement here today. Your offense breaks out. Tomorrow you're going to meet a team that just a week ago -- less than a week ago you played right down to the wire in a game that you could have been on the winning side of. What's the belief level with this team right now? What's possible for this Xavier team?**

AIZHANIQUE MAYO: Anything is possible. We have nothing to prove. We want to go out and make it far, shock everybody. Our thing that we say is Mind on March, and that's where it's March time came from. We're going to go out and shock everybody.

**Q. When you win a conference tournament game first time in a decade, you're not leaving after two questions here. Meri, tell me about this team. What is it about the culture of this group that's allowed this group to stay together? Because there's a lot of teams that could have just let the season end, thinking about the Bahamas or whatever. You showed up here. You played hard. You won this game. What is it about this team?**

MERI KANERVA: I would say we believe in each other. We stayed together. I don't know. It's just, like, it's not been the best season, so everybody is, like, we got to go and show. We believe in each other, and we want to, like, believe in us and go out there and stay together and, like, come out strong.

**Q. Meri, I'll piggyback off of what you said a little bit, and Aizhanique you can chime in here as well. But saying that we want to show what Xavier basketball is, that we have something to show, what is it? What is Xavier basketball playing at your best?**



MERI KANERVA: I would say playing together, showing passion, and just sharing the ball. Like, I don't know. Yeah, staying together and showing we can play really well, and offensively and defensively be really aggressive.

AIZHANIQUE MAYO: Especially on the defensive end, we're a defensive program, and that's what we want to come out and be good at every day.

**Q. Aizhanique, was there any talk coming into this weekend of what you could do? John mentioned it too. It's been a decade since this has happened. Was that in the back of your mind a little bit? Did you guys have conversations, or was it just, hey, we're going to come in and play some basketball?**

AIZHANIQUE MAYO: It was just come in and play basketball (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so much. Questions for Coach.

**Q. I'll bring that same question to you a little bit, right, with the significance of this win and how big of a deal it is for your program, taking that next step forward. What does it mean to you to be the coach that earned this win with your team, with this specific team?**

BILLI CHAMBERS: Sure, it's obviously huge for our coaching staff. We believe in this group. We understand the process. We know that it's early in the process. So you get close so many times and you feel it every single time. You know they're feeling it.

Like Meri said, they do a good job of continuing to believe in each other and find the positive moments and the wins in every single game. For us to have the opportunity to come in and get it done -- they're not even thinking about ten years to the day. They had no idea until we talked about it just before we came in.

It's huge for our growth, for kind of a reminder of even though we didn't quite get it done the way we wanted to get it done this season, we're still on the right path. We're still building something pretty special.

I'm super proud of how hard they worked to bring this one home.

**Q. When a freshman and a sophomore are the ones who are combining for 55 points in a conference tournament game on a team that finished in the top six in this league, that's an eye-opener in a lot of ways because they were made for the moment. What did**

**you see with these two in how Meri and Aizhanique played off one another and allowed each other to benefit?**

BILLI CHAMBERS: It was awesome to watch, and you could see -- Nique, obviously, we've had so many conversations throughout the year of her up-and-down play and her frustration with her up-and-down play. Obviously coming out of the gate strong last year when she was cleared to go, she was looking for so much more for herself and had higher expectations. But she stayed the course.

You could see it slowing down for her a little bit, right? You start to get guarded a little bit differently as a sophomore when they know who you are. And she was still so rushed in so many moments throughout the season. She just let it come to her.

You saw those two so many times having conversations of how to control it, what to do, what reads to make off the ball screen. It was really special to see those two come together. Such a young duo taking us to that win. It's really awesome to watch them grow up right before your eyes.

**Q. What did you do against Seton Hall less than a week ago that must translate tomorrow night?**

BILLI CHAMBERS: I thought we defended really well. I thought we disrupted them. We're a team, like they said, that wants to disrupt for 40 minutes. We want to throw different presses at you. We want to send you to your second, third, fourth option. We want to deny your best players. We want to take you out of rhythm. We want to take charges.

The first time around at their place, I think we took seven charges, which is our most in the game for the year. You could see them kind of pulling up early at our place, not getting all the way to the rim because they wanted to avoid the charge. So make them take tough, contested twos.

We did a great job of that at home, and I think it built a lot of confidence. Obviously it goes without saying, Jada Eads was not playing in that game, and she's a really tough matchup. So I'm assuming she'll be back and ready to go for tomorrow. We're going to have to be even more locked in on making sure we take away option one, two, and three.

But this is a defensive-minded group, and they want to disrupt. They know they're coming -- no pressure on, just go and spoil everything.

**Q. It's a spot in the conference tournament semifinals**



**on the line tomorrow night. This is a step. The way that we talked yesterday, you said to our group, you didn't think about just winning one Big East game this season. The goals were higher. When people see Xavier women's basketball, they see some tradition. They see some banners, albeit in a different league. Things have changed, but it begs the question of, okay, what's possible at Xavier? I know you have a large goal list of things that you still want to accomplish, but if there's something we're saying on national TV tomorrow night when your program is on that stage in the quarters, what do you see as the vision of Xavier women's basketball?**

BILLI CHAMBERS: Sure. I think there's something so special about a team that just never gives up. I think we've seen it so many times in games this year where it just hasn't gone our way, things haven't gone right. We've turned the ball over way too much, we've given the other team way too many possessions, and made it hard for ourselves to win basketball games.

But you see them. You see the energy. You could see it all week as we were preparing. They bought into the idea of 0-0 and come in and just take all the good with you and throw away all the bad.

They truly committed to that coming into today, so you could feel the energy. You could feel the bounce going into it. There's something truly special about a team that never stops fighting, and that's who we want to be, a defensive-minded team. You never quit. You play from buzzer to buzzer to get after it.

This coaching staff is here to build. We knew we took on a really tough lift, and we're here for every single moment of it: the good, the bad, the hard. And we're excited to take this program back to national prominence.

**Q. Just to follow up on that, when you say take all the good with you and throw away the bad, from today's game, what's the good you're going to take with you going into tomorrow?**

BILLI CHAMBERS: I think the biggest good you can take is the composure when we let the lead slip away. For a young group, you see the eyes look at you, like, what are we doing here? You could see in those moment some of them take over and settle the team down before we even said a word as coaches. That composure is going to be really important for us.

Seton Hall is a very tough team, a very well-coached team, and we have to stay composed for 40 minutes if we want to get one more.

