

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Seton Hall Pirates

Coach Anthony Bozzella

Postgame Media Conference



Seton Hall 48, Xavier 40

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Seton Hall, head coach Tony Bozzella, student-athletes Yaya Lops and Faith Masonius. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: Late night. First of all, congratulations to Xavier. I mean, talk about a team that has shown great improvement each and every day.

Billi, I've known for a long time, and obviously actually I worked with, and their some tremendous coaches and their staff. And look at how much they kept getting better and better and better as the year went on. We were in for a really tough battle, but the young ladies never lost faith -- thank you, Faith. They never lost Yaya either.

We didn't play particularly well. They were the reason for it. I give them credit. They had a great game plan. Their defense was tough. But I'm not going to lie. I'm just really proud of my kids. It's really hard. It's hard to win. We have 22 wins. It's really hard, and the two young ladies on the left deserve a tremendous amount of credit.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Yaya, your steal and then go ahead layup, can you walk me through that play?

YAYA LOPS: I saw the ball coming to me, and I just knew I had an open layup and that was my time to put us up two, and I made sure I did that for my team.

FAITH MASONIUS: While she's cramping, should I say.

YAYA LOPS: In both my calves.

Q. The two of you as grad students, it really did seem, as Coach said, it was just one of those games there's a

lid on the basket, ball is not going in. It's just one of those nights. How do you stay the course for 40 minutes and really kind of dig in late? You held them scoreless for the last almost four minutes of the game. How do you keep that sort of confidence in yourself in a game like that?

FAITH MASONIUS: Oh, man. I mean, I think coming out the first game sometimes in a tournament, if you are playing a team who has their feet under them, played on the court one time. We're coming in here kind of fresh, not shooting on the basket.

I think it's us working day in and day out since June. We've worked all year up to this point, so we can't just lay down and stop. Especially us being grad students. I don't know. You just have to keep fighting, keep pushing, and it worked out for us today.

Q. Ladies, halftime you scored 15 points. What did Coach say to you during halftime to get the team motivated to get back in this game in the second half?

YAYA LOPS: Just keep fighting. You know, we've been here before, and we just knew that as a team that we just had to come out more competitive, fight, get downhill, and rebound, which we did in the second half.

Q. It seemed like it was a full team effort. Everybody was kind of cold tonight.

FAITH MASONIUS: Yeah.

Q. Did you see that? It was a full team effort. How does it feel to come out with a W and move on to tomorrow?

FAITH MASONIUS: It's really nice. First half we definitely didn't play our best basketball. That's another thing that was mentioned at halftime. We didn't play our best basketball, but we were still in it. Coming out we knew we just had to focus on defense. We're one of the best defending teams in the country, especially with our press, so we knew that was going to get us going.



Yeah, it feels good to get a win when you're not making layups, baskets. I don't even know how many threes we hit.

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: One.

FAITH MASONIUS: Last game we played them, we hit only one too. A lot of twos.

YAYA LOPS: I agree with Faith. Our press is really our juice, and that's what we did tonight.

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

Q. You had a little minor flack this week with a comment you made. As far as I've known you and have covered the team, you have been very respectful to your fellow coaches in the league. You're a big champion for the Big East women's basketball. Any comments about that?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: I mean, I think you're referring to my comment about I need the league to do more. The league does a ton. We have the best Commissioner around. My respect for Val is usurped by nothing. I just want us to keep doing more and more and more.

Jackie Campbell is not only a great administrator, she's a friend of mine. And they do a lot. We're not where we are, but all I want is us to push and continue to do more, like I would tell my team. I've known so many of these people at the Big East for so long. Tania Kennedy is not only a great worker here. She's a friend.

We have some great, great people here. Jackie Eddy is doing a great job promoting us and everyone is. I just want more. I just think we have a really good product. Like I said the other day, we have the best team in the country in our league in Connecticut. They are.

But we have Creighton, which is a top 20 team in the country, and we have right now three other teams that have a chance to make the tournament. I just want us to keep pushing and pushing. That's all.

I love people. We have a Commissioner that champions women's sports and women's basketball. She's the best. I'm sorry if it got construed in a way that wasn't necessarily positive, but it is positive. The Big East does everything for women's basketball. We give more to women's basketball and we care more about women's basketball than any league I've ever coached in. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the Big East.

If that was construed in a different way, all I'm trying to do is coach. That means pushing our players, pushing everyone around us. I'm the confidence captain. That's my job. I represent all 11 universities and all head coaches here.

Like I said, I didn't mention just Seton Hall. I want Villanova and Marquette to have those opportunities. I want St. John's to have a chance at the BIT. I think they're a really good team if you saw the other day with their win.

We beat a really hard Xavier team. There's no 11th-place team in the country that can play that way. Credit to Billi and the staff. I love the Big East. They do a great job. I'm just trying to push all the time, like my team.

My admiration and my respect for Val and Vince and everyone, especially my friends there -- Tania is a friend of mine -- is usurped by nothing. I appreciate you asking that question because my respect for the Big East is tremendous, and I love them and I love how hard they work and Jackie Campbell is a close friend of mine.

At the end of the day I just want to keep pushing. That's all. I'm proud to be a head coach at Seton Hall. I'm proud to be a head coach in the Big East.

Q. Your thoughts on playing -- five years in a row. You guys are just magnets with each other in this tournament. You keep running to each other in high stakes moments. What's going through your mind? Some thoughts on matching up with Flan and his squad again?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: I'm glad you asked me. They're 51-11 in the past two years. They've lost five times to Connecticut and twice to UCLA. They're one of the best teams in the country.

For them to be listed as an eight or nine seed in this bracketology is a joke. They're a top 20 team in this country. We should be talking whether they're going to host or not.

They're well-coached. They have great players. They have smart players. They have a great program. They have a veteran team. I'm not allowed to bet, but I said, I guarantee they will be in the round of 32, and if they get the right draw, round of 16.

For them to be considered an 8 or 9 seed right now is a joke. 51-11 in the past two years. Seven of the losses being to UCLA or UConn. Really good.

It's a tremendous challenge. It's not one we haven't seen



every year, let's be honest, but we know for us to get to the tournament, we're going to have to beat a really good team. We're excited for the challenge. The respect I have for Creighton is usurped by nothing. Their staff is tremendous. They have a great staff. Their head coach is one of the best in the country.

But we love this opportunity. For us to get to the Final Four of the Big East, we have a great team. We needed this. This was a really important win for our program right now. It wasn't pretty. It was really ugly. I'll be honest with you, I am still a little confused on how we did it.

We did it because we have a lot of heart and a lot of effort. I mean, Jada Eads, she was 6 of 6 from the line. Savannah, nine rebounds, nine points. It was just a tremendous effort by our girls.

I'm excited to play Creighton. I am.

Q. I would be remiss as someone who covers the team to wish you congratulations on being the Coach of the Year. Any thoughts about that?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: Yeah, not me. It was a well-deserved honor to Cara and Gino. They're great. I will say my staff deserves Coach of the Year. I've had a long, hard year.

My family deserves Family of the Year. It's been really hard for me. I lost my mom. I lost my cousin. I've been sick in the hospital a bunch of times. They deserve all the awards.

I just want to say, I'm just really proud of this group. It's really hard to win. I mean, we have 22 wins. Geez. We have eight losses to teams that only have 20-plus wins. It's really, really hard.

While tonight might not go down as the prettiest victory, we've played a lot of great games here and lost. We played an okay game and won.

I just want you to know that young lady was a pain in the ass to guard. One of my last playoff wins was against her. She's not only my friend. She's an amazing person, and I'm proud that she works with the Big East. Like I said, I have so much respect for the Big East, but it's only for Tania because I do love her. Thank you.

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