

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Seton Hall Pirates

Coach Anthony Bozzella

Faith Masonius

Amari Wright

Postgame Media Conference



time. They're extremely well-coached. And I was quoted about saying that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Faith, I'll ask you. Coach just talked about your team's heart and passion. Where does that come from?

FAITH MASONIUS: I think the heart and passion just comes from wanting to play for each other and for our coaching staff. Sometimes it doesn't always go as we planned.

But one thing about us is we're never going to give up. We're always going to stick our heads places they probably shouldn't be, get in the paint, try and bully our way through, but it just didn't work out for us today.

Q. For both of you. Just talk about the start you guys had which got you in that giant hole.

AMARI WRIGHT: Yeah, you know, it kind of happened yesterday. We just can't dig ourselves in a hole like that. Obviously we're going to fight back and never give up, but you kind of -- it doesn't help you when you get yourself in a hole like that, so we're going to be better at that.

Q. Ladies, you have a week off until you know what your fate will be in the next tournament or so. What are your plans for next week? I'll ask Coach the same question when you are done.

FAITH MASONIUS: Yeah, I think a big piece for this week is definitely resting. We've got a lot of old ladies on this team. Just taking care of our bodies. I think that's a huge piece that's really important on the court and off the court. Mentally, physically taking care of yourself, so...

Q. Is it tough to not know who your opponent is yet?

FAITH MASONIUS: I think it definitely is, but that's the game of basketball. You wait and you find out next Sunday.

Creighton 73, Seton Hall 44

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Seton Hall, Head Coach Tony Bozzella and student-athletes, Amari Wright and Faith Masonius. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: Congrats to Creighton. They're a very good team, and they out-coached us for sure today, and they came in with a good game plan. Give them a lot of credit. Their players played well. They showed they have a lot of experience, fifth-year players together. They came out and hit the first four, five, six, seven shots and really took control of the game.

We made a nice run in the beginning of the third quarter. I thought the kids played with a lot of heart and passion. Then we had three or four stops, and we just could not score. You know, you are only going to stop them for so long.

One of our big Achilles heels and where we're a terrible matchup with Creighton is we're not a great three-point shooting, defensive team. They go 12 for 23 today. Just really, really something that I have done a really poor job of coaching this year. Fortunately, we're still playing in the postseason, and I'm proud of the team. Being the third best team in the Big East isn't easy either.

The two young ladies to my left have been amazing leaders and amazing players. While this is extremely disappointing to all of us, especially those two, I'm very proud of the team. We're a great team.

Creighton is one of the top 15 teams in the country. They're really good. They've played together for a long



Q. Faith and Amari, fifth-year collegiate basketball players, I know this is your last Big East tournament, Amari and Faith, in your first year here playing on a high stage like the Big East tournament. Any takeaways you want to say to the fans? So many people look up to you guys and have really seen you guys as role models, as absolute weapons on the court who have changed the game here for Seton Hall women's basketball. Anything else to say?

AMARI WRIGHT: Yeah, we get so much love and support from the fan base, everybody that came up here, even the band. So it kind of sucks that we went out like this. I know they're still going to support us. Our season is not over yet. We're going to rest, reflect, and get back after it.

FAITH MASONIUS: Yeah, I think for the fans, like Amari said, our band, our supporters, everybody who came out. You guys made the trip, you guys are the best and always supporting us. Even the little girls that look up to us, it's been really nice being able to talk to them and just be around them. They're all so excited to see us and look up to us. It's just a lot of fun. It's awesome.

Q. Faith, can you just talk a little bit about what it meant to you to play with this group this year? Amari, you can answer that as well too.

FAITH MASONIUS: I think for me -- oh, wow. It was really scary coming to a new place. Sorry. I don't get emotional like this. Coming to a new place is really scary, but they welcomed me with open arms, the coaching staff, the players. They made me feel like family right away.

Yeah, it's just been a lot of fun getting to know them. It's been a blessing to be able to come back home. So I'm just really grateful and blessed with the opportunity to play here.

AMARI WRIGHT: For me, I've been here for five years. This is all I know. This is family. This program has watched me grow up, so this whole team means everything to me. I'll do anything for them. We're just a family, you know, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Faith, Amari, thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. You've been vocal all week about your guys' chance to make the NCAA Tournament, and you put a lot of pressure on today's game. What can the Big East Conference do as a whole to lift up more teams having chances to make it than has gone on so far?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: I got in trouble for that answer,

and it's misconstrued. I want everyone to do more. That's all. It starts with us too, Doug. We need to win the game today. There's no question about it. We needed that quad 1 win. We needed to win the game. We didn't do our part. It has to start with our part.

Like I said today in one of my quotes too, I'm conference captain. My job is to represent all the teams, and I think I spoke very vocally and very eloquently about Creighton, my opponent. They're not an eight or nine seed. Are you joking? They're really good.

People who watch them play -- and I don't know what the result is going to be against Connecticut tomorrow, but Connecticut is really good too. I thought Villanova played fantastic today. Lost the game by 28 points. Denise did a great job.

Cara, the job she's done this year at Marquette. You look at yesterday's quarterfinal games, the No. 10 seed played a great game against Creighton, and the No. 11 seed played a good game against us. So it's a really deep league.

Liked I said, we just have to keep promoting ourselves. Val is a tremendous Commissioner and a great leader of women, and we're blessed to have her.

I went to each and every Big East staff member I heard today and said to them -- or yesterday. I said to them, they're fantastic people. I appreciate all you do. I just want to try to do more. It doesn't mean we're not doing enough. We just could do more.

I think the Ivy League does a great job promoting them, and I think the A10 does a great job promoting them. We have to get those bids away from them. The A10 is going to get two bids because Richmond got upset. And the Ivy League is probably going to get a couple of bids too because they've played well.

We have a good team. We had our opportunity today. We said we had to get to this game, and we had to win this game. Not only didn't we win, we got dominated. That's a tribute to Creighton and how good they are. That's my point.

I think today went a long way in proving my point of how good the Big East is. Our No. 2 team is ranked 22nd or 23rd in the country. These other leagues don't have that. It's not a knock on them. It's just how good Creighton is and how good Connecticut is obviously.

We had our chance today. We put ourselves in the chance. The Big East has supported us and gave us that



opportunity that if we had won today, we would have been right there, and we didn't. We got dominated.

So we'll play in the BIT, hopefully host a bunch of game, and do what Villanova did and play for a championship next year. These kids want to play, and they're great kids.

I appreciate you asking me that question. You and I are good friends, and you know we have great healthy debates. But we put ourselves in position, the Big East helped put ourselves in a position to play for a berth today, and we got beat.

Q. What's your next week look like?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: We'll review, and we'll self-reflect as a staff. But I told the kids I won't see them until Friday at least. We won't play until next Thursday or Friday at home. I'm sure we'll be a top 4 seed.

Then it will be nice to play someone who doesn't know you as well as Creighton and -- look how good of a job Xavier did. It will be nice to play someone new before our home crowd. Our crowd has been amazing. We sold out of our ticket allotment and had to sell more tickets. That's a tribute to our fans, our dance team, our band, our cheerleaders.

Not only did we have SOU covering us, we had all the SOU people up here. So shout-out to them. They're wonderful people.

When I took over this program 12 years ago, if you told me I would sit up here and lose in the semifinals and have all the support that I have from my administration -- my AD was here, our president was here. How thankful I am. Our vice president was here, Pat Lyons. Monsignor, our president, was here. That's amazing.

The support we get at Seton Hall is second to none, and we're going to go out and play really well, and we're going to play a bunch more games.

Q. I'm not sure what's happening yet obviously, but do you think any motivation for what the men did last year in a similar situation?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: Yeah, I would like Shaheen to speak to them. I really would. I'm going to talk to him. Obviously he's busy with the Big East this week, but I would like to have them talk to him. Shaheen is a great friend of mine and tremendous coach. I think a fantastic leader.

So I am going to actually ask Shaheen to speak to our

girls. Because it's hard. We're disappointed. We're frustrated. But they're great kids.

This isn't going to take away from the fact that this is the most enjoyable team I've coached in my 12 years. They're wonderful people. They really are. I love them. All coaches say that, but I really do love these girls.

These girls, Amari, Faith, they have not given me one ounce of anything but everything they had. Faith got emotional. I don't want to get emotional yet. But Faith will go down as one of my all-time favorite transfers and Amari will go down as one of my all-time favorite high school recruits.

Q. I love that you just brought up Faith here, and this week you told us she's the unifier of all unifiers. How was that on display in today's game where you had to fight back, and there was so much passion in today's game?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: I think they led us back. Listen, like Doug said, you can't get yourself in a hole like we did. Jesus, I never call time-outs early, and I called two. They came out, and their experience really showed. They got scared last night by Georgetown. They were sharp as could be today.

Then we cut it to nine, and Faith is in there pushing and pushing and pushing. You know, we didn't score three straight times. You got to -- we had to cut into the lead then, and I knew when we didn't do that, it was a problem.

Obviously Savannah, one of our best players was off and gets in foul trouble and ends up fouling out, and that didn't help either.

Q. We're talking a lot about the veterans and your senior and graduate players, like Faith, like Amari, like Kaydan for reference. Talk to me about your youth player, what you're seeing with Jada Eads, Savannah Catalon, Ja'Kahla Craft, Joniyah Bland-Fitzpatrick? What growth have you seen within them this past season?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: Joniyah and Ja'Kahla have helped us win games. We wouldn't have 22 wins without them. Ja'Kahla bailed us out yesterday in the Xavier game. Joniyah is just a wonderful young woman. She can work on her game next summer and be a real impact player for us. She has gotten a lot better. I hope she wants to do that.

I do think we have the best returning back court in the league with Jada and Savannah, and they have to get



more experience, stay healthier. Both missed time with injuries this year because of ankles. We need to strengthen them. We need to get them with a great nutritionist and a great strength program that we have to.

They'll start it, I'm sure, as soon as we're done playing basketball. You'll see a bigger, stronger, leaner back court with those two next year because no one works harder than those two.

Q. Apologies for asking a Creighton one. You've coached against this group, this core more than anybody in the Big East because of just the way the matchups have shaken out in the postseason. What are your thoughts on kind of what you have seen over the years in the development and maturation and kind of the way that core has elevated from what Creighton was to what it is?

ANTHONY BOZZELLA: I'm glad you asked me that question. I have so much respect for them.

People think -- you know, he talks hyperbole. But no one studies the game more than me. I've done this a long time. They're really good. Like, they move the ball. They're really well-coached.

Not only have we played them, I think, five straight times -- we're 1-4. We've lost on a tip-in. We've lost on a buzzer beater. We beat them on a buzzer beater. We win the pool play of the USA three-on-three tournament, and who the hell do we play in the playoffs? Creighton. Who did we lose on the last-second shot too? Creighton.

No one knows them better than me. I find it an honor and privilege to play against Coach Flanery's team. They have great young ladies.

Molly Mogensen, I've had a chance to exchange some emails with her mother. She's an amazingly wonderful young woman. Her mother shared some really thankful things. I compliment Molly a lot because I think she's one of the unsung heroes of Creighton, and I compliment a lot. Her mother wrote me a nice email thanking me. So we've exchanged emails. That kid is a tough kid. Look how much better she's gotten.

Not only are they good, but they've gotten a lot better. When they were sophomores they beat Iowa. That was before Iowa was Iowa. Losing Ronsiek, you thought they might take a step back, and they didn't. A kid like Mallory Brake and a kid like Kiana Lockett and a kid like Jayme Horan. They've stepped up for them.

Obviously Jensen and Maly and Mogensen are just so

tough. They do a great job moving the ball and stuff.

Jim does it the right way. His staff does it the right way. His players do it the right way. I think we're very fortunate to have them in the Big East, and I know our kids will strive to be as good as they are. I think if we can keep this core together, especially our back court, then we have a chance to be really good next year.

Once again, I want to thank the Big East staff. They did an amazing job. Everyone knows my affection for them. Just their organization, their pride, their caring, the people from Tania on. I coached against Tania, she's a hell of a player.

But I want to thank you and I want to thank all the people for coming out. A special thank you to SOU. They've been amazing all year. They're wonderful people. They're so professional. Bobby has done my weekly show. I want to thank him for that. Meghan, we've been together a long time. I really do appreciate you. Thank you very much.

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