

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Creighton Bluejays

Coach Jim Flanery

Lauren Jensen

Morgan Maly

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton 73, Seton Hall 44

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Creighton, Head Coach Jim Flanery, student-athletes, Lauren Jensen and Morgan Maly. We'll begin with opening statement from Coach.

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, obviously this was a little less stressful than last night. We got off to a great start, put the ball in the basket a lot early, and defended pretty well.

The second quarter was bumpy. We didn't handle their press nearly as well as we did the rest of the game, and I thought we just kind of lost rhythm, which can happen.

I mean, Seton Hall is a really good team. You know, to be up 11 compared to where we were last night felt quite a bit better. But, yeah, I thought we came out in the third quarter and kind of re-established. We didn't score great in the third quarter, but I thought we defended pretty well. Kind of kept it right at that 11 to 13 range, and then once we kicked it out past 15, it was over.

These two, as always, you know, lead us and do so many things to kind of right the ship. You know, at some point they're going to put their imprint on the game. Lauren was maybe, like, right away. Morgan was later. I think Morgan only had -- I looked it up one time, and she only had three. I'm, like, wow. But then she had a lot more than three by the end.

Yeah, excited to be moving on. We have a monster challenge tomorrow night, but we have a group of competitors who will be super excited for all of that opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. For the way you started the game last night, obviously you were really good offensively, but Georgetown kind of got hot tonight. It seemed like you guys were more balanced in terms of getting stops, scoring off of them. Was that a focus coming in to make sure you can get off to a really good start? That way if they did get hot, it wouldn't spiral?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, it definitely was a focus of ours. But also on the defensive end, if we can get stops, we can rebound, and run and push. That's what we wanted to do. We were able to do that in the beginning of the game.

We got a little bit away from it when they started to press. You know, they scored, and they were allowed to set up in that press. So I don't think that helped us much, but we were able to stabilize a bit in the second half.

Q. For both of you. I know you haven't focused on UConn yet, but you played them twice this year. What have you learned from the two meetings that might help you tomorrow night?

MORGAN MALY: We have to limit turnovers and just handle their aggressiveness and physicality with aggressiveness and physicality. Yeah, make them make tough shots if that's possible.

Q. You started out 3 for 3, Lauren. When you see the ball go in early like that, is it one of those you're feeling like this is going to be one of those games where it's easier to score, or is it kind of just natural rhythm, just part of the game?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, it's nice to see some go down early. Honestly, I don't try to let the highs get too high and the lows get too low. I let the game come to me.

I know that I'm going to miss shots. I know I'm going to make them, and so be it. I just have to trust my shot, trust my process, and so just trying to stay in that zone.

Q. Morgan, in the third quarter, start of fourth, you



started to separate the lead, build it back again. What did you see in terms of you guys' execution level against the press and shot selection that allowed you to rebuild it?

MORGAN MALY: I think we really looked to score more coming out of the press in the second half versus the first. Got a few easy ones, and that just kind of let us build momentum. And that transitioned into getting more stops and just having the offense flow a little bit more, get everyone involved.

They were switching a lot. So we did a good job slipping on cuts and ball screens, and Lauren on putting anyone in an island is good.

Q. Obviously tomorrow is the big game. How is the team feeling about playing UConn, essentially a home game?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, we feel good. I mean, UConn is a great team. We're going to have to be on, but we're going to be ready for the challenge. We know what we can do. We know that we're a good team. Obviously UConn is a really good team as well, and so it should be a fun game.

It's a big stage. It's conference championship. This is where we wanted to be, and we're really looking forward to it.

Q. Just a follow-up, do you feel like you want to have a statement getting ready for the tournament?

MORGAN MALY: Yeah. I think it will be good to see where we're at again this late into the year and see how you play through fatigue in the big moments when one game means a lot more. So, yeah, it will be fun.

Q. Can you take me through teeing up the one from super deep, Morgan? You were guarded, and I know you have a lot of confidence. Just thought process of why you wanted to put that one up, and it was the dagger, and you did hit it?

MORGAN MALY: I feel like any shot I shoot is a good shot. My teammates sometimes don't think so. But my hand was down. Their hand was down. I feel like I hadn't shot the ball in a while. I was, like, I'll shoot this.

Q. Obviously the full 40 is going to be key. It's probably going to be maybe the hardest game you've played in your guys' lives. The ten minutes -- there's been a ten-minute segment in these UConn matchups that have kind of changed the game. How do you guys prevent just that from happening where they hit you

with the game-changing run and keep you at arm's length the rest of the way?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, I think just staying together as best as we can. I mean, UConn is great at finding a window. Once they do, just putting their foot on the gas and not letting up. That's one of the most dangerous things about them.

So when they do have that moment, which there will be ups and downs -- you know, UConn is a great team -- we need to stay together, and we need to respond.

MORGAN MALY: I'll also add -- I think Flan said this yesterday when we were down 8-10 most of the game. He was, like, you're not going to make a play for 8 points. It's kind of like you can't get sped up and feel like you have to make a great play when they're on a run, and you feel that momentum swinging. I feel like just staying composed, yeah.

Q. I know we talked yesterday a little bit about just legacy that your group specifically is going to have with this program. And to kind of put into perspective your team is playing in the Big East title game for the first time since the program has done it since 2016. It's your group that got you guys there. Speaking of competitors that Coach just said that you guys are, how is it you have willed your way to get there? And in years past when it hasn't fallen your way, this year you were, like, it's our last year, it's our last opportunity, we're getting there?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, I mean, that's been circled on our calendar for a long time. We've wanted to get here. That's definitely been one of the things that we've come up empty. Just because we're in the championship game finally doesn't mean we're satisfied.

So we're looking forward to it. The Big East tournament is always a battle. We had a tough battle against Georgetown last night and Seton Hall fought tonight. Yeah, that's what you are going to get in the Big East. We're looking forward to another battle tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Lauren, Morgan, thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. I know it's different personnel, but just in terms of the start you got off to and how balanced it was with the shot-making and just the one-shot possessions they had that allowed you guys to keep putting distance between them, what was the difference between the starts over the last two nights that allowed it to be so dramatic tonight?



JIM FLANERY: Well, we did get off to a good start last night. It was really kind of that second quarter really each night. Last night was 30-16 in the second quarter, and tonight was 16-10.

Last night it was more defensively we just didn't do a great job on Ransom, and she was kicking it. They had people making shots. Tonight it was I thought more our offense in the second quarter in terms of just we weren't very tight against their press.

We had 6 of our 14 turnovers, I think, in that quarter and just didn't attack. I told them, Seton Hall they're a team that presses, and they've been historically that way. I said, our best success against them usually is when we try to score out of the press off a quick ball reversal or square up and put your nose to the basket instead of, you know, having your shoulders be away from the basket.

I thought in the second quarter we were just not very good with that. We got disorganized. We got out of alignment a couple of times too. That doesn't help. But, yeah, we got off to a good start last night. It was just we didn't -- we just gave them so many points -- not gave them, they earned them -- but you can't give up 30 points.

The fact that we only gave up 16 in the second quarter with the turnovers was big because if they could have cut into that lead even more, you know, their mindset is probably different at halftime. With it being at 11, our players still were probably a little more comfortable and confident, and they knew they were going to have to continue to dig out of the hole. I think that part is a mental thing. But, yeah, I thought both nights we got off to a good start.

To your point earlier about Connecticut, those quarters against Connecticut are worse than any team in the league. So if you turning the ball over against Connecticut, it's not going to be a 16-10 quarter. It's going to be way worse than that. That will be the challenge tomorrow night.

Q. Coach, you're playing on the biggest stage tomorrow night. Can you talk a little bit about what that means for you and the program?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, I think these players who have been with us for this long deserve that opportunity because they've put in the work. They've cared for each other and stayed with our program in a time where that's not always the case. So I'm happy for them to get that opportunity.

UConn is a measuring stick game. I think obviously we want to win, but I want to play well. I want to see where we are in this environment too. It's hard enough to play them

at a neutral site or at home, but to play them here, we're going to be really tested.

But this group, I'm happy for them because I feel like they deserve that opportunity. The other thing is when you ask -- I mean, sometimes you've got to give your opponent credit. I thought Georgetown played great last night. That wasn't -- Seton Hall is a really good team, but that wasn't their best. We played well, but that wasn't their best tonight.

Sometimes in a conference tournament you just run into somebody who plays a little bit better than you that night, and you get a little tight.

If you look at last night, Seton Hall was the clear favorite over Xavier. They get behind. They get behind. It's tough.

Same thing with Creighton. We're the 2 seed. We're playing the 10. To play from behind, you've got, hey, we're the ones that are supposed to win. So I think getting beyond that. But I think that's a maturity thing, and the ability to kind of stack last night onto -- stack tonight onto last night is why I think we're a good team.

It's because we're mature enough to not think that coming back and finishing the game last night was going to matter tonight to Seton Hall.

I think it helps that we've played Seton Hall five years in a row in the conference tournament. Our players know what kind of battles those have been. This is the only one that kind of got away from one of the teams.

Q. The five losses you have, they were to really good teams on the road. Tony said it was a joke that you are only an 8 seed in the bracketology. Where do you think this team is in the scheme of nationally? You coached really good teams at Creighton. Where do you think this one fits? Tomorrow night could change things, but right now where do you think you guys are?

JIM FLANERY: Wherever Tony says we are (laughing) because he is always going to -- I love it. He promotes the league. He's an advocate for the programs in our league, but we schedule the right way. Look at our schedule. We played UCLA. We played at Kansas? -- our first four games, at South Dakota State, they were picked to win their league; Drake at home, they're picked to win their league; Nebraska went to the second round of the NCAA Tournament at Kansas State. They were picked to win the Big 12. When we played them Ayoka Lee was playing for them.



Our first four games were against NCAA Tournament opponents. Two of them on the road.

Green Bay, we played December 7th. They haven't lost since; 20 in a row, 20-whatever in a row. Wyoming, finished second in the Mountain West. We had all that scheduled, and then the last game we took was UCLA.

I think that's why I hope we get rewarded because we go out and play people in the non-con, and we don't care where it is. Duke went to Brookings and won. That's great, but Duke is going to be a 2 seed, and they won by five. We lost by five. You know?

So I think, yeah, our five losses are -- four of them were in the top 10 when we played them. Kansas State was in the top 10. South Dakota State is currently rated.

This team is tough. I mean, we did get steam-rolled by UCLA, but I feel like we're going to go play. Whatever seed we get, we're going to go play. That's going to be our mindset. It's not going -- we're not going to feel like we got disrespected. That doesn't help you.

I mean, I know how tough our group is, and I know that we're not an easy prep. If you have never played us before, I think we're different than a lot of teams. I think if you talk to coaches, we're different than a lot of teams. That's going to be our MO.

Q. Somewhat insignificant because of time and score, but the garbage time minutes especially from true freshmen Liz Gentry, what did you make of just their tenacity and seizing a moment that they were allowed to have in the semifinals of the Big East Tournament?

JIM FLANERY: I'm happy for them because everybody -- we have 11 on our roster. Liz Gentry and Sydney Golladay haven't gotten to play a lot, so for them to get close to six minutes in a conference tournament I think is great.

When Liz caught the ball, she finished. You know, she works her tail off. She's playing behind fifth-year kids, but I'm excited for her. I think she'll be a good player.

Yeah, I mean, I thought that group played really well. Jayme hit a three. Kennedy hit a three. I turned to the bench and said, God, I should have put these guys in earlier. And Liz wanted to take a three. She was eyeballing one.

Q. You just saw UConn two weeks ago. How much are you able to adjust and re-game plan when you are seeing a team for the third time on that quick of a turnaround?

JIM FLANERY: Even today, you know, you just say, hey, here are the things that have been most effective over two games. Here are the areas where we've struggled. We're going to tweak this and have a Plan B for this.

You know, we've beaten Seton Hall twice. You don't want to just feel like, oh, let's change a lot because then the players are looking at you like...

Against UConn it's really been ball security both games. We went into that last game third in the country and fewest turnovers a game, and they had 15 steals. And I thought -- they had 13 in the first game, and I thought, well, Kiani Lockett didn't play. Now we have three ball handlers in our starting line-up. We might have another issue or issues, but it won't be as heavy on the ball security side. Lo and behold, we gave -- they had 15 steals instead of 13. We've got to do that first and foremost.

If we don't, I think we can guard them in the half court. Transition, obviously, they can -- Villanova played a great first half today. Paige kind of just -- when, what was it 32-31, and then all of a sudden she was, like, I'm going to go get in the lane and hit a shot, I'm going to hit a deep three. They're really good, but that's why they're elite good is because when they are teetering, she just -- she can do that.

But, yeah, they're good in a lot of areas, and I think they're playing really well, I mean, as evidenced by what they did. I know South Carolina, it's now been about a month ago -- right? I don't bet, but aren't they the betting favorite to win the national championship? I think I read that.

You know, I said to our staff after that last game. I said, on paper that's the hardest game that you could play. The team that's No. 1 in the NET, odds-on favorite to win the national championship, and you are playing them on the road. Tomorrow night is on the road, but we'll find out. We'll find out if we can be better than we were the last time.

Our kids know that we've been in both games to a degree.

Q. To your earlier point about what you told them against Georgetown when you were down double digits, tomorrow night when UConn punches you, the arena is going to kind of make you feel it because they'll have a lot of electricity in the building. How do you get them to just play a possession at a time regardless of the way the game is swinging?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, we'll talk to them about that beforehand, but I like what they said. I mean, it really does



come down to composure. A 6-0 run can't become a 12-0 run. You know, if it does, you're going to struggle. I mean, we went up 8-0 at their place. Even then it took them a while to kind of get their footing.

Again, we cannot turn the ball over at the rate that we have the first two games because that's easy baskets for them. They're a really good half court, defensive team, but we can't let them get out and get easier baskets in transition. Because we have a veteran team -- we can guard well enough in the half court if that's what it is, I feel like, but we have to be better on offense.

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