

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Monday, March 10, 2025

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

Creighton Bluejays

Coach Jim Flanery

Lauren Jensen

Postgame Media Conference



UConn 70, Creighton 50

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Creighton, Head Coach Jim Flanery, student-athlete Lauren Jensen. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

JIM FLANERY: Congrats to UConn. I think it's probably easy to take for granted their excellence and what they do year after year after year, but I'm sure in the chairs of their staff, they know how hard it is.

I mean, we've won 52 games the last two years, and it feels like, it couldn't get much better. Yet, that's what they've done for over 30 years.

We knew it was going to be a really, really difficult game. Obviously the start wasn't what we scripted, but you know, I'm super proud of our group for hanging in there. We had that thing down to 14, and that's just a reflection of the fact that we don't give up, that we're connected, we were resilient.

You know, we made plenty of mistakes tonight. I told the team, our margin for error is really small when you play those guys. And we made -- a lot of it was how good they were in the first quarter, but we also didn't communicate and had a couple of softer turnovers that kind of put the game in a really difficult spot right away.

As our team has shown, they're resilient. They care about each other. They lift each other up. And that's why even with five whatever to go in the game, the game was back in a position where we maybe could have found it -- put a little more game pressure on them.

Anyway, we're excited for our next challenge wherever that is. I know that our group with the experience that we have is going to be very determined and confident going into the

NCAA Tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for Lauren first.

Q. What did it take from you guys to not let the first quarter barrage put you in a bad place mentally and let the game get away?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, we're experienced. We're a veteran team. We have played UConn a lot. You know, they're going to go on runs, and it's really important to stay composed. It would have been nice if we were able to not let it get so far away from us, like Flan said. We played them close the rest of the game.

It was tough to chip into that. But, yeah, just staying composed, staying together is what you have to do to get through it.

Q. I'm sure you guys are frustrated because it's been one bad quarter all three games against them. What's kind of going through your minds as you sit in the locker room and think about those matchups? Is it what could have been, or is it what you did do?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah. I mean, obviously you're kicking yourself a bit. You never want to lose. Losses aren't fun, but they're especially not fun when you know you could have done better. It was that one stretch.

They made shots -- like Flan said, the margin for error is really slim when you play great teams, and UConn is a great team. Defensive miscues and miscommunication, and they made us pay.

Q. It looked like there was a couple of shots that you guys had opportunities to take early in the game, and it looked like some of their players may have been hesitant. Can you speak to that, please?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah. I think there was some shots that we could have taken. UConn's defense is really good, and so we've got to be ready and loaded up to shoot that. I feel like once we settled in a little bit, we got better and a little bit more shot-ready. But I think it was just getting

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settled into the game and getting those nerves out.

Q. Does a game like this help you going into March? You have an experienced team. But playing one of the best teams in the country, wherever you play in two weeks, they're probably not going to be as good as this team was. Does it help you going, hey, we can do some things to whoever we play down the road?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, for sure. Like I said, UConn is a great team. They're a national championship contender. Whenever you can play games like this, it's a great opportunity. There are a lot of things that we can learn from it.

It's not all bad. It will definitely get us ready for March. Whoever we see is going to be a good team, and so we just have to take this loss and learn from it.

Q. Just thinking about your career here with Molly and Morgan, the three of you have just had so much success. Can you talk about what it's been like to play with them and kind of how you three have set the foundation for the future of the program?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah. It means everything. I love my teammates so much. I love playing basketball, but I love my teammates even more.

They have put in so much work. We've all put in so much work, and I know I wouldn't be the player or person I am if it wasn't for them. I'm really grateful I get to do what I get to do every single day the past four years with them by my side.

Q. I know this isn't the reason you came here, but I'm curious what it means to you to kind of -- you and Paige were AAU teammates, and also with Mallory. What does it mean to kind of be on the championship stage and play your last Big East game, win or lose, going head-to-head with her?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, it's really cool. There's been a lot of battles between Paige and I and my teammates from Minnesota. She's obviously a great player. Any team you get to go up against a great player, it's fun as a competitor. It's cool to see where we've been, and I can't wait to see where the rest of her career takes her.

Q. You talked about the opportunity and enjoying the moment. It really did seem even when you guys got down early, like, you enjoyed competing tonight and fighting. Can you speak a little bit about playing and what that means?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah. We're competitors. I'm a competitor. Like I said, I love playing basketball. So whenever I'm in a basketball game, I'm going to compete, and my teammates are going to compete. Whether we're down 20, up 20, we're not going to fold.

I'm proud of our fight tonight. We're representing Creighton. We're representing this team, this university. That means something to us. We're proud of this program. We're going to go out and compete night in and night out.

Q. How challenging will this be to kind of get over in time to prepare yourselves for the last run?

LAUREN JENSEN: We'll let ourselves feel it. UConn has obviously dominated the Big East, but we really believed that we could win tonight. We're a great team. We believe in ourselves. We wanted it.

So we're going to let it sting. I feel like great teams should let it sting a little bit, let it sit in, use this feeling, learn from it. But we'll be ready to go come Selection Sunday and our next practice.

Q. How important is it for you guys to start quickly when the tournament begins?

LAUREN JENSEN: Yeah, you know, UConn obviously came off to a hot start. So matching that is important. It's hard when you get on your heels against UConn. And so just staying composed and coming out of the gate strong is important to us, but weathering the storm, if you can't.

Obviously it's an ideal situation if you want to start strong. But keeping a level head and playing through that if you don't is really important.

THE MODERATOR: Lauren, thank you for your time. Questions for Coach.

Q. This is a really competitive group. What is your kind of -- I guess how did you approach them in the locker room post-game knowing that it essentially was one bad quarter three times against UConn that essentially changed the game and put it out of your reach, I guess?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah. I think that's one way to look at it, but I think they might have played a little differently. I mean, that's basketball too. Part of it was we didn't play well, but they played really well that first quarter.

I asked yesterday if we need to get off to a good start and I said we've been fine the first two games. It's cliché, but it is a 40-minute game.



And that's what -- that's where, I think, UConn is so good is they stress you for 40 minutes. They make you uncomfortable for 40 minutes at both ends. They run their offense faster than -- there might be teams that have bigger players, faster players, but nobody runs their offense faster. And nobody -- I think the way they defend -- particularly against us because they're so good at switching screens. And we felt like we had to make a lot of downhill plays with the dribble tonight. We weren't able to make as many of them as we wanted to.

I thought at times we did, but it's tough for us to move the ball against them because of how attentive defensively they are, and they're very good at switching screens. Then, like I said, offensively they run their stuff really fast.

With our group, I don't worry as much about getting off to a good start because I feel like we're -- I really do believe that we're mentally tough enough to absorb a rough start.

Nerves were part of tonight. Nerves will be part of -- whether we go to a half-empty arena or mostly empty arena in a first round game, nerves will be present. So I think you've kind of got to overlook.

Now, of -- and to me, it's different. Are your mistakes because you're not docking on defense and you're not trying to rebound versus, hey, I'm sped up on offense. Those are two drastically different things. So I think our group will be good that way.

Tonight it was, yeah, clearly a major uphill fight. If you keep that thing at eight or ten even after the first quarter, but to have it be at 16, that's really tough. Really tough to come back from.

Q. Coach, you kind of called this yesterday. If we could take care of the basketball and turn 6-0 runs to be just 6-0 and not 12-0 or whatever. I think you had seven turnovers in the first quarter, and you said some were a little on the softer side. You cut it to four, and then they went on a run to close the quarter. Did you feel like, okay, we didn't do what we were hoping we would do, and that was the main problem?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah. We got it to, what was it, 11-0. Obviously everybody was telling me to call a timeout, but I thought -- you know, I trust our group, and the media was coming. Then all of a sudden it's 11-7.

Okay. We absorbed the start. We'll get our footing. Then, yeah, we butchered the end of the quarter. We had a chance to take the last shot.

That's what I said. I thought too often we play to the score, and in that stretch we didn't. This is human nature, but, okay, we turned -- I said we didn't fight when we turned the ball over. We didn't run back and communicate at the level that we needed to to maybe make that transition opportunity off the turnover more difficult.

I felt like we felt sorry for ourselves just a little bit, but a little bit is all you would have to do when you are playing this team in this environment.

Like I said, I think if we would have just had it at even ten, we're good enough that -- and here's the other thing. It's the third game in three days. So part of it is UConn played great the first quarter, but they missed many open shots over the next three quarters because it's the third game in three days, and your legs aren't the same. We did too.

I don't want to say it was -- but the third game in three days is never as pretty as a normal game just because of the fatigue factor. I mean, you also know each other really well, but I just think this is the only time you play three games in three days unless you go to an MTE at Thanksgiving.

Q. You talked about the difficulty of playing UConn's defense because they switched so much. Are they allowed to be that good because they just have a connectivity about them, or is it just intelligent play, well-coached? What is it about the defense?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, they're well-coached. They're well-connected. They're competitive kids, and I mean, they're well-schooled in switching. If you look at the way their team is built -- I know they start El Alfy, but, what, did she play, eight minutes? They play a small line-up a lot, so they're not worried.

They're committing to being disruptive more than they're worried about matchup integrity, which there's going to be times where they're going to be exposed on switches. But can you connect enough passes to make them pay at the level to beat them? It's hard to do because they're really attentive to the things that they do well.

They're built differently than what we've seen the last couple of years. Probably because they don't have Edwards from a physicality standpoint.

But, yeah, I think they're taught well. It's not even that they do switch. It's they switch really well. Like, a lot of teams switch screens. And especially when they play us, we're always guessing, okay, are they going to -- because a lot of times teams when they play us, they default to switching more because we set more off-ball screens than most



teams.

But UConn, that's what they do, and they're really good at it.

Q. Just kind of what I asked Lauren, but from your perspective, coaching that trio, they've accomplished so much in their time at Creighton. What's it been like to coach them? How have they helped you become a better coach? How have you adjusted to their leadership and their journey throughout Creighton?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, I just said -- you know, I mean, the thing I marvel at -- and this is as a male coaching women -- is just the level of care that they have for each other. It's been a long time since I was in college, but I don't remember my college friends looking out for me at the same level that this group does.

I think they're just incredible at lifting each other up. I think they -- I can give you an example. If I'm getting on a kid a little bit in a timeout, there's at least one of her teammates that are reaching out and patting her on the knee or thigh. Lisa is laughing because she's probably seen that.

I'm going to chew a player here or there in a timeout. They're incredible at lifting that kid up in that moment or that teammate up in that moment. Yeah, you want the best for them.

I also said this. Like, in a day where it's a lot easier to be selfish in college athletics, this group is not. I'll take this group because I feel like they've made a lot of sacrifices for each other and for our school. They care about their legacy, and they want to make Creighton better in the future. I really believe that. I think that's rarer than it's ever been.

Q. Can you talk about the defense you played against tonight? Against Chen, you forced a couple of turnovers against her, and at least -- you had about five turnovers. Can you talk about the intensity that you brought to UConn's point guard tonight?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, I thought Molly really competed and had two steals early. Kind of steadied us a little because we obviously didn't get off to that start.

I think, yeah, I mean, the bright spot was we forced more turnovers against them by a significant amount than we did the first two games. We had 11 steals. I don't have my reading glasses on. How many did we have? 10 or 11.

THE MODERATOR: 10.

JIM FLANERY: We forced more turnovers than we did, so I thought our disruptivity defensively was better than it's been. We're a connected defensive team. And just like they are committed to switching a lot when they play a lot of people, but especially us, we're committed to switching a lot when we play them because they're just -- we just feel like there's too many bad things that can happen when Paige and Sarah are in an action together that you just -- they're so good at any two-player action that they're in that we just have to switch a lot and then take a risk off somebody else.

I did think our ability to force some chaos defensively was better than it had been. We held them to 72, 72, and 70 the three games we played them, so it wasn't our defense as much as it was our offense.

Q. To that point, I guess, how portable -- Morgan said yesterday that you have to match their physicality and aggressiveness with physicality and aggressiveness. How portable is that part of what you did tonight going into Selection Sunday and your practices and the games in the NCAA Tournament despite the score tonight?

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, I think it is. I think our team likes -- they like a decent amount of information on their opponent, and they like to get in the weeds and dig into that.

At the same time, I think this group has been a little bit better at just, like you said, bringing a level of physicality on the defensive end that maybe we haven't asked them to have in the past in some ways. That's probably a criticism of myself.

I feel like we have a little bit more of a bulldog mentality defensively. I thought that was on display in the first quarter despite the score.

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