

Big East Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Uncasville, Connecticut, USA

Mohegan Sun Arena

UConn Huskies

Geno Auriemma

KK Arnold

Sarah Strong

Serah Williams

Postgame Media Conference



been put in, and I wish I can say it was a light bulb switch, but I think it's just me coming in every day in practice and every game and just trying to be my best.

Q. Despite the tough win in general, what is one thing about your guys' identity that you think hasn't shown up yet? You guys have improved throughout the season and done amazing things. What's one thing about this identity that you guys think hasn't actually shown up yet?

KK ARNOLD: I think everything clicking on the offensive end and the defense defensive end. We're all there on the spots, things that we practice in our practice, the way that we practice just really all comes together during the game time, and I feel like we all know when that happens. I just feel like we go from there.

Q. KK, sometimes when a team comes off a break and goes into a tournament as a big favorite, it takes 'em a little while to get going. But you guys showed energy and just a lot of focus right from the start. Is there just something different about this team or are you just focused in right now on what's ahead?

KK ARNOLD: I feel like it's March and it's time to lock in. I feel like coming out of the game, we need to come out strong and throw the first punch and just keep it going, and not really have one of those starts maybe that we had during the early season of just, like, slow starts and not really just having that kind of like going power. But now we do have it and we have to get into it right away.

Q. Speaking about first punches, how impactful is it for you when Serah Williams is having the start that she does on both ends?

SARAH STRONG: Yeah, when Serah starts off the game like she did today, it gets everyone going, and I'm happy to see her confident out there. I feel like that gives the rest of the team confidence to be aggressive and do what she's doing out there.

Q. KK, at what point in the season, whether it was

UConn - 84, Georgetown - 39

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement and then take questions.

GENO AURIEMMA: The tournament's really something that the players and everyone looks forward to. Coming down here, it's a great way to get rewarded for a great season. Obviously you would like to get off to a great start like every other team does. I thought we did just that. We came out and we got a great start and everybody that played contributed something and we look forward to playing tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Serah Williams, you had a monster start today. Season high 14 points. It's your first conference tournament win. What was it like going in today to make your debut in the Big East tournament?

SERAH WILLIAMS: It was definitely special. It's a new team, a new experience. Usually by now my seasons in the past has been over, so just taking advantage and trying to have fun with it.

Q. Serah Williams, Coach talked yesterday about how the St. John's game felt like it might have been a turning point for you. Have you felt something change in your mindset since that game that you brought into today?

SERAH WILLIAMS: Yeah, I've been working a lot of how to, like, make it work on and off the court. A lot of work has



before the season or now, did you realize that this team could really be a juggernaut on defense?

KK ARNOLD: I feel like, honestly, practice. Practice makes perfect. I feel like practice, we have exciting practices where we're just having great rotations, communicating on defense, and just that translating into the game. I feel like we see spurts of that and just knowing that's our identity kind of this year, just our defensive pressure and how we can turn over the ball and create for our offense. I feel like that's the biggest thing.

Q. Was there a point in the season when that happened?

KK ARNOLD: Tomorrow (laughing).

Q. Geno, why were you looking at Serah Williams like that? What about her has clicked in that she just started off -- you had a 10-0 run and she had eight of 'em. She was on the front of the break. Like, just how awesome is it to see her contribute like that?

GENO AURIEMMA: I don't know, I just love when players are asked questions and they have to give it a little bit of thought. It's always amazing to me to hear what comes out of their mouth. This was game number, what, 32? I don't know that it was, like, a switch or anything. I just felt like if I come to practice every day and be the best that I can be and play my best every game, that this will happen.

And I'm like, oh, imagine if we only had 28 games in the season. We would have missed all this, you know?

So it's interesting when they think about it and they actually say, hopefully, what they mean. How simple it sounds to something that's been kind of complicated for the whole season. So, yeah, I just get a kick out of listening to kids answer questions.

Q. You've coached so many great teams. What's something about this team in particular that necessarily doesn't show up on the stat sheet that's special?

GENO AURIEMMA: Going into the season, I thought that it would be a real struggle to get through it because I knew there was not going to be equal playing time. And when you have a lot of players that think -- in, like, today's world, you know, maybe all the time, but certainly today, that everybody should get the same or close to the same amount of playing time, same amount of shots, etcetera. And I was anxious to see how long will this last where everybody's happy, happy, happy just to be winning.

And to be honest with you, it's been like this the entire season where we just come out, we play, and whoever's playing well, everybody on the team is pretty happy for them. We don't treat our superstars like they're anything special. They're just two kids on our team that are fantastic players, but we don't come out every game -- like you saw today, like, we don't come out every day and go, Oh, we got to make sure Sarah Strong gets 15 shots. We just play and everybody contributes.

I think the last thing that I would say is, we're not as good as we look, but we make it look really good because everybody kind of chips in a little bit. But individually, if you took us and just spliced us all up individually, we're a lot better as a group than we are individually.

Q. You have brought some really good teams here and struggled in the first round game, just because you're coming off a layoff, you're maybe not completely motivated. What's different about this team? Is there just a different passion in their focus or their energy?

GENO AURIEMMA: I don't know. I think that the complexion of the league has something at times to do with that, the maturity of your team sometimes has something to do with that. Having already been in this situation years now for Ash and KK and Azzi, you have enough veterans that understand this is what we have to do. And you have a bunch of new kids that are anxious to play well, because this is their first time in it. So I think it's a good combination. It's not anybody wanting to go through the motions and just kind of show up. So, you know, we usually play pretty good in this tournament. It's been known to happen.

Q. To take you back to Serah Williams for a second. Did you see something change in her approach coming into today, and what kind of aligns for you guys when she comes out the way she did?

GENO AURIEMMA: 24 hours from now we'll be in the middle, or we'll be just going into another game. We'll be playing, right, I think it's the 2:30 game tomorrow. So when I'm talking to you tomorrow after the game we'll have a better idea. I always think -- I don't even know how to put it. I always expect the best out of everybody, but I'm always prepared for the worst, just in case, you know. So like I tell the players, once is an accident, twice is a coincidence. So her last game was against St. John's, right, and now this one's a really, really good one, right? So tomorrow we'll know whether it's a coincidence or a trend. I'm hoping, and I think, based on what I've seen the last four, five days, it could be a trend. But just having, you know, a five-minute conversation with her about, you know, this is your last hurrah. This is what people are going to

remember about you when they evaluate you for where you're going next. What kind of impact can you have in this tournament. She's a really nice kid. Too nice. She's a really nice kid. I think the pressure of playing here obviously is immense for somebody who hasn't grown up in the program, you know. So you can tell how happy she is when it finally comes together for her.

That's why it's hard to criticize kids like that, because they don't know what this is all about. They try so hard to be what everybody wants them to be, so the pressure and the expectations and the scrutiny is just so great. And you're a senior, and you have aspirations to play next year, it can really mess with you, you know. If you grow up in this program, you just kind of shake it all off and go, it's no big deal, we do this every day. But for a new kid, you know, it's a lot. It's a lot. But if this is kind of sort of the Serah Williams that we're going to have for the next, you know, three or four weeks, that's pretty good for us.

Q. At halftime they honored the legends. How much does it help to have someone like Peggy, she was on your first team before you had the national championships and WNBA first round draft picks, and how much does it help the players to have someone like that that was here from the very first day?

GENO AURIEMMA: Yeah, obviously you know, she's old enough to be their mom. So for them to go, Oh, yeah, Peg was a real good player in the Big East. I don't know that they look at it that way, so it's good for them to kind of be reminded that my first year, you know, Peg made First Team All Big East. She set a school record 25 rebounds in a game, which wasn't hard to do at the time, really. I mean, there were so many missed shots by us, it's just not that complicated. But just a hard-working kid, tough, hard-nosed kid, who just loved to compete.

I was fortunate to have her my first year, because I know how bad she wanted to win, and I knew how bad it had been for her, and how much she wanted to end it on a high. And I kind of took that as, you know, if I can help her finish her career feeling like she accomplished something and kind of started something, and I think we did that.

Now fast forward, her kids have graduated from UConn, she's got great kids. And her husband norm played football at UConn, and he's going through some very serious health issues right now, and our prayers are with him and Peg and the family. So in the middle of a really, really, really difficult time for her, it's nice to be able to kind of be remembered, you know. Not everybody gets a chance to be remembered. We all hope we are. But I think what the Big East does in that respect is a really, really good thing. There are a lot of former players that I

saw out there that I wish they looked the way they looked now when I was coaching against 'em. And I got reminded too by Britt King, You know, I'm not going to say this out loud, but we never lost to you guys. I said, Thanks for reminding me of that.

So it was really good to get caught up with all those kids outs there, but I especially felt proud of Peg.

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