

# Never Forget Tribute Classic

Saturday, December 11, 2021

Newark, New Jersey, USA

## UCONN Huskies Women

Prudential Center

## Coach Geno Auriemma

Postgame Press Conference



UConn 71, UCLA 61

GENO AURIEMMA: Yeah, there's moments in the games where someone has to make a play of some sort. You have to have the kind of players that can make those plays during those moments. Sometimes those moments are early in the game, sometimes they're late in the game. But a lot of times if you get off to a pretty decent start, it kind of settles everyone in, and people take a deep breath and they kind of feel good about what their contribution is going to be. And the opposite is true if you get off to a bad start; people start to press and people start to feel like they've got to do too much.

So I thought Eve really kind of got us going in the right direction right from the very beginning.

**Q. What changed in the second quarter? You guys went on a run.**

GENO AURIEMMA: There were more clean stops by us, and then being able to get out in a little bit of transition and try to get some baskets early in the shot clock and around the lane. That gave us a little bit of momentum.

The team is a much different team right now, so we don't have quite the ability to push the ball and spread the floor, but we can still run up and down the floor and get to the basket. I thought we did a really good job of that, especially in that second quarter, and then we carried it over into the third and fourth quarters.

**Q. The way that third game ended was on a really kind of heavy note. Did you see the team kind of come together to try and work through things, fix things after that game, or did they have to figure things out almost in real time today?**

GENO AURIEMMA: I told the players, every loss tells you something about yourself and about your team, and every win tells you something about yourself and about your team. And that particular loss the other night probably told

a lot of our players that you're not good enough right now the way you're playing basketball, and it told our team that you're not really playing as a team.

You can use any excuse you want. Well, we don't have half our team. Well, that's neither here nor there. You can still play as a team even though you're missing key components of your team.

I think the change was let's try to be more, play as a team. Dorka mentioned it a couple times. Instead of five guys running up and down the floor and hoping something happens, play through each other, play for each other, make things happen for each other. That happened today.

Sometimes you have to find it during the game. Sometimes you have to find something during the game that allows you.

**Q. Do you see a situation where some of these players could grow and develop and improve while Paige is out and when she comes back the team kind of benefits as a whole?**

GENO AURIEMMA: Ideally that's what you hope in every injury situation, that when a key player goes down, someone as dominant as Paige, like I said, every time somebody is out, that gives somebody an opportunity to step in. If you've been standing on the sidelines, so to speak, and watching, and now you step in, you start to feel pretty good about being in instead of being on the outside, and now when Paige and the rest of our players do come back, now there's more people in the party instead of outside hoping to get in, and feel like they belong in and can contribute, not just when they have to, but they'll be able to contribute just as part of the natural flow of our offense.

**Q. I wonder if you could take me through the type of work that Dorka has been doing leading up to what she's (indiscernible).**

GENO AURIEMMA: Dorka, she's a difficult player to describe because when I first saw her, I was really

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pleasantly surprised at how skilled she was around the basket and how hard she played defensively. She's a better shooter than she was shooting the ball, so I was hopeful that that would come.

The one thing that gets in Dorka's way more than anything is she tries to play too fast and then her skills run away from her because she's playing too fast. It's been a constant struggle since the middle of October to slow her down.

I thought today she had a pretty good pace about her. But she always plays with a certain intensity level and a certain strength. She's a force out there, you know. And it's not easy for her to come in after playing three years in a different system and then coming here and having to try to adjust to what we're doing. Even now it's not 100 percent there, obviously, but little by little, I hope today was an indication of what she can be.

**Q. I'm just wondering what sort of adjustments (indiscernible) did someone say something? I'm just wondering have you seen things change (indiscernible) some switch came on, whatever?**

GENO AURIEMMA: I did say something about I don't like this piece of hair of mine that sticks out on this side, and I'm going to have to get that looked at. I said other than that, there's really not much that's bothering me. We just have to slow down basically. That's been my message for forever now.

So the whole time-out was basically being very intentional, here's where we want to go with the ball, here's what our spacing has to look like, and here's who's going to facilitate this, and on the defensive end here's the adjustment that we have to make in guarding how they're attacking us.

It wasn't really anything other than just a reminder to them that this is what we wanted to do, and we executed. That's generally what leads to runs. You have a plan and you execute that plan.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

GENO AURIEMMA: For Amari? I asked Amari, I said, in the golf world, there's people who play golf and then there are golfers. So are you just somebody who plays basketball, or are you a basketball player? Because if you're a real basketball player, then you need to start talking like one, acting like one, thinking like one, expecting yourself to be one, because you have the skills to be all that.

So if you want to play, I need to see that, and I'm going to

give you an opportunity to play. That's twice now in a couple days where she's handled herself pretty well, and I hope I can give her more minutes as we move along here.

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