

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - UConn vs Florida

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Lenovo Center

UConn Huskies

Dan Hurley

Alex Karaban

Hassan Diarra

Samson Johnson

Media Conference

Florida - 77, UConn - 75

THE MODERATOR: We are now ready to begin the UConn press conference.

Coach Hurley, could you start with an opening statement, please.

DAN HURLEY: Credit Florida. I think this just historic run that these guys have been on and the guys that have worn the uniform the past couple years, if it's going to come to an end for us, I wouldn't have wanted it to be in a game where we lost to a lower seed. There's some honor, I guess, in the way that this went down.

It's a tough loss. We played in a manner that gave us a real chance to win. Credit Clayton. He made some NBA level 3s off the dribble to beat us. It took that for somebody to put us down in this tournament after winning obviously a bunch in a row here.

Obviously words can't describe the respect that I have for the men to my left.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Alex, can you speak to how frustrating that last sequence was when they kept getting those offensive rebounds off the missed free throws and just how frenetic that was?



ALEX KARABAN: Yes, super frustrating. They were giving us gifts. They were missing free throws, and we just didn't capitalize on the opportunity. If we grab those rebounds, who knows what would have happened?

That's not the thought right now, but we just missed out on those opportunities.

Q. Hass, can you speak to the defense you guys played particularly in the first half. You were very disruptive and kind of took them out of rhythm until really the last few minutes of the game.

HASSAN DIARRA: Yeah, we really guarded them really well. Everyone was in the position they were supposed to be. I thought we followed the game plan extremely well, especially in the first half.

The second half they just caught fire. We had little lapses on defense.

Q. Samson, can you just talk about your time at UConn and how much it's meant to you. You're the winningest player in UConn history, so I wanted to give you some time to tell us about your time.

SAMSON JOHNSON: UConn is my family now. I've enjoyed going to war with these guys every single night. I've met some incredible people, the coaching staff, all the people around. It's just like one family. We care about each other so much. They'll always be my family.

Obviously having the most wins in the history of UConn is a great accomplishment, but I feel like, if we had one more win tonight, it would have been even better. It is what it is, but UConn's family.

Q. Samson, in the first half you came away with nine rebounds and really played with a fire and a tenacity that Dan Hurley would describe as a warrior spirit. Were you feeling extra amped up coming into this game because of how big the moment was and considering who the opponent was?

SAMSON JOHNSON: That's always my mentality going into games. I didn't want to go home today. I just wanted to win the game. You've got to give it everything you have.



I feel like that's the mentality I came into the game with, and I was trying everything in my power to have my team win. We just came up short.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, you're excused. Thank you very much.

He'll open the floor up for questions for the coach.

Q. Dan, what hurts the most about this? Is it because it was right there for you, or is it more the ending, if that makes any sense?

DAN HURLEY: Listen, it ended in San Antonio cutting the nets down again. It was going to end in a real emotional way for us.

Part of it is probably too just the season, just how tumultuous the season's been, how hard the team battled and fought just to qualify for the tournament. Then for how the game played out up through the last media, two free-throw rebound mistakes now.

Past teams we've had issues like that occur, but those were in games we're up 15, 18, so they weren't as magnified.

Obviously the Karaban drive on the baseline, there was a lot of contact there. We're up one, I think, at that point or two potentially. I thought that was a big play too.

Listen, you credit the teams. A team like Florida, Clayton made two 3s off the dribble that were like NBA level, stop on a dime, highly contested, and I thought we had a lot of great looks in the game. I thought our off-ball movement created a lot of good looks from the 3-point line that we just couldn't cash in on.

A lot of emotion, man. We're a passionate program. The players play with it. I coach with it. You're always f---ing drained when it's over.

Q. Coach, I'm curious, you knew this was going to end at some point. Does the loss help put in perspective how special the last two years have been?

DAN HURLEY: Yeah, I didn't even -- I would say going into the year, there's a lot of rewiring and things I've got to do in the off-season because you just get caught up in this tidal wave of success that we've had. You lose perspective. You struggle with the ego at times because you've been on this incredible run.

It will be nice to get to a normal off-season and just get back to myself as a coach and not have to throw out first

pitches. You should only be ringing stock market bells and throwing out first pitches when you win the major championship. I won't have to do things like that. I'll be able to just focus on the upcoming season and make better decisions with all aspects of coaching.

When I was asked about the 13 in a row, you have no idea the company and what we've accomplished. So we can take some solace in that. But today was -- to be that close to getting to a Sweet 16 and knowing that the 2 seed lost yesterday, this bracket could have really opened up for us, and we knew that going in once we saw the 2 seed lose.

Q. Dan, same question to you I asked the players. Can you just talk about briefly what each of these guys meant to your program: Alex, Samson, and Hassan?

DAN HURLEY: They change your life. Young men like that change your life. I was a coach, not necessarily on the hot seat going into 2023 -- you've got to ask Dave Bennett -- but until these men, until Alex Karaban put on the uniform and Samson (tearing up) -- the players change your life when you have such special people.

Q. I'm going to ask you the same question I asked Samson. I was wondering how did you feel early on about the physical presence your team brought and the effort early on. Even when they don't get the rebound, they're trying to smack it out of Florida's hands. I was wondering if you could comment on the early effort you guys gave.

DAN HURLEY: I don't know that we could have managed the game better than we did. We dragged them into the type of game that we wanted to drag them into. We kind of dragged them into a Big East, low-possession game. It just did not resemble an SEC game. They shoot in the first six seconds of the possession; we shoot in the first nine seconds of the possession.

We dragged them into a game that was the only way for us to give ourselves a chance to win. I thought we did an admirable job on the backboard. The only reason we were out-rebounded by such a huge front line is because we took 14 more shots than them.

I think, when we go back and watch this film on this flight back today, I think it's going to be crushing looking at those free-throw rebound plays again, looking at the Karaban finish on the baseline with a no call on that.

I think a lot of the 3s, we took some tough ones because they're a top 5 defense in the country. We had some really good look at 3s that could have given us some separation down the stretch actually.

Q. No question, Coach. Just wanted to thank you for the last three seasons.

DAN HURLEY: I want to thank CBS Confidential because that crew right there of three, there's nobody better, Rachel and your squad right there. You've been part of it the whole way, and we appreciate you so much. Thank you.

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