

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Semifinal - Duke vs UConn

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Portland, Oregon, USA

Moda Center

Duke Blue Devils

Coach Kara Lawson

Reigan Richardson

Kennedy Brown

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah. It's not a great feeling to lose like this, but I'm super proud of this team. It was our all first time being in the Sweet 16, so I feel like we're all just proud of ourselves. I feel like going into next year, I'm super pumped, super confident. I'm just ready to get into the gym as soon as I can. If it's -- probably not tomorrow but, like, maybe, like, a week or so.

Q. For both of you, what did you feel like UConn was doing at the defensive end that was causing you guys the amount of trouble you were having in the first half?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah. I feel like UConn did a great job with disrupting us. We did have a lot of turnovers. It's something that we've been trying to work on the whole season. I mean, at the end of the day, UConn executed their game plan very well, and they came out with the win.

Q. Kennedy, I have a two-parter for you. Do you have a COVID year, technically? Do you know?

KENNEDY BROWN: I was told I do not.

Q. So you end your college career in the same state you started it in. I know it's weird, but there were probably a lot of Kennedy Brown fans in the stands today. Just what was it like to play here at the end?

KENNEDY BROWN: Yeah. I mean, we played here last year in a Thanksgiving tournament, and so I got to see some familiar faces then and again this year.

It's nice to see those people and reconnect for sure. Honestly, I wasn't thinking about that too much. I really was just focused on our team and where I'm at now and trying to leave it all out on the floor.

Q. For both of you guys, what's it meant to you guys to watch sort of your young teammates, sort of how they've grown and evolved all throughout this year? What's that meant to y'all?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Seeing our younger team just

UConn - 53, Duke - 45

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Duke, head Coach Kara Lawson along with student-athletes Reigan Richardson and Kennedy Brown. Coach, we'll begin with your opening statement.

KARA LAWSON: It wasn't our night tonight. I thought UConn did a great job of executing defensively what they wanted to do. We struggled to score the ball all night.

I thought defensively we played well enough to win. That's, obviously, a high-powered offense. We were out of sorts and out of rhythm on the offensive end and just weren't able to, until late, get enough points on the board.

But as I told our team after the game, I'm just really proud of them, proud of the season we've had and all the growth we've had. It's been amazing to coach this group. And I'm just really lucky to be able to be with them every day. It's been a joy and just fortunate to be at Duke and get the chance to coach our whole team, but especially these two that are sitting up here with me.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to open it up to questions for the student-athletes.

Q. First of all, sorry about the loss. I know it's a really tough one. But with a loss like this, I just wanted to get just kind of your mindset at this moment. How long are you going to take to just kind of reset at this moment before you come back and start working for next year again? Just talk about your mindset right now and how you're feeling.



develop over the course of the season has been really awesome. I know for me, we get to come again next year and try to get back to the same state we are here and hopefully go farther.

I know the beginning of the season was a little iffy at first, but seeing them grow so much, it's just been awesome to see, and I'm super excited for next season.

KENNEDY BROWN: Yeah. I mean, it's been amazing to watch the growth that these freshmen and everyone, really, throughout this whole season. I couldn't be more proud of them and just the composure they have showed, having to kind of step up as a freshman and play a really big role for this team.

So I'm really excited for them moving forward and excited to watch them and really just thankful that I was able to be a part of this year.

Q. For both of you. I know, obviously, not the result you wanted, but how do you feel about your defense and the energy that you put on the court throughout the game that did seem to frustrate UConn at times?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: I'm super proud of us. I feel like our game plan from the beginning was to disrupt and make things hard for them. And I think towards the end of the game, we fought back as hard as we can. And I feel like our defense showed up.

KENNEDY BROWN: Yeah. I mean, that's something we've prided ourselves on all season. It's not going to change in this program. It's a staple for us. And so being able to make things tough and kind of, like Reagan said, disrupt a little bit of their normal flow was really the goal.

Q. For both of you guys. You guys were down as much as 20 during this game, fought back in the last five minutes to cut to within five. What was the team's mindset there with those last five minutes, just keep pushing and ended up cutting it to almost a one-possession deficit?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, our mindset was to just keep fighting. Everything was on the line. We had to put it all on the line. Our mindset was to keep fighting and to keep pushing.

KENNEDY BROWN: Yeah. I think that's kind of been our mindset all season is just to compete until there's no time on the clock. And so we still had time to make a run, make a push. And so that was really the mindset going into that last quarter was to just try and cut it as close as we could.

Q. This question's for Kennedy. You've had an incredible career, a career to be extremely proud of. I know at this moment you're probably not thinking about that. You're probably thinking about how could we have done better. But looking back on your incredible career, what are some of the moments that you cherish the most and some things that you're going to hold on to for the rest of your life? Because you've got your sister. You know they're going to be there for you for the rest of your life, right? It doesn't end here, right? And so I was just curious what you're going to cherish the most, what you're going to miss the most, and what's next for you.

KENNEDY BROWN: Yeah. Definitely had a lot of ups and downs throughout my career. I'm really thankful to have ended it here at Duke with amazing people by my side. I couldn't have chosen better people, honestly. And so these last two years have been really special for me.

And I'll miss the people the most, honestly. Getting to come in every day and work to get better and to teach and learn has been really special for me this year, I think especially this group is a really special group, and I'm excited for them in the future to watch them grow. And I'll continue to be their number one fan.

We'll definitely come back and visit and cheer them on 100%. So, yeah. It's the people for me, and the people make the place. And so I think that's really, my career has been made special because of the people.

THE MODERATOR: Other questions for our student-athletes? Thank you both very much for your time. Appreciate it. And congratulations on a great season. All right. The floor is open for questions to Coach.

Q. Coach, you guys sort of had a tough time scoring especially down low in that first half. What do you think made it so tough to get inside and get those high-percentage shots that you guys like to take?

KARA LAWSON: I think it was just crowded in there the whole night. So when we did get touches in the paint, there was multiple players in there. They did a great job of bringing multiple players when we got catches. It flustered us at different times.

And then our inability to finish down there I thought hurt us when we did get touches. We missed a lot of layups. And a little bit uncharacteristic for us.

You know, their rhythm, we never really got until going into late. So I would just say that it was just crowded in there was probably the biggest difference.

Q. You obviously mentioned that UConn executed their game plan really well. Was there any sort of tactical adjustments you wanted to make on the offensive end to try and get more buckets, or was it just hitting those layups that didn't fall, like you said?

KARA LAWSON: Yeah. I think the whole goal of offense is to manufacture quality looks. And, obviously, when you're in the middle of the game, you're feeling out what the other team's doing and then trying to find a way to do that.

So for us, I thought our shot quality in the second half was a lot better than the first half. I thought we got some open shots, not just layups, but open threes as well. And some open pullups.

We just didn't hit enough of them. I mean, you hate to boil it down to something that simple, but we didn't hit a lot of them. That's the way it goes sometimes.

I think anytime you struggle like this on the offensive end like we did, I think both teams deserve their share of the credit. I think they did a great job of making it difficult for us. And I think we did a poor job when we did get opportunities, whether it was converting in transition. We had a lot of two on ones and three on ones that we fumbled. And we did not finish. And those are points that are valuable that you need to convert on.

So through the course of the game, just trying to find ways to settle ourselves and try to get some quality looks. We had an open pullup jumper by Reigan and an open layup by Jadyn late to cut it to three, and we missed both of them. And those shots, I'm not pointing that out. Reigan and Jadyn were great. But that's the kind of night it was for us. And like I said, they had a little something to do with that.

Q. You said you were trying to settle your team. Was there anything in particular you told them to try and settle them, or was it just kind of letting them grow into the game because they're relatively young?

KARA LAWSON: Yeah. I mean, I thought initially I was trying to let them grow into the game because it was the first Sweet 16 for everybody on our roster, and we were scattered to start. Okay? We did not look like ourselves.

The issue was it was everybody. A lot of times normally, like, is there one player or two players? You kind of can pull them out and put someone else in and settle. And it was, like, all of them. And so I couldn't sub them all. We need to have five players. That's a rule, I think, out there.

So that -- I was trying to let them settle. And then we dug ourselves a little bit of a hole. At the end of the first quarter, I always try to just say to them, like, hey, here's where we are. With all that said, at the end of the first quarter, it was 10-6. We're down 4 points. And so for me it was just reminding them of where we were in the game, what the deficit was. And let's just try to string some quality possessions together.

Q. Kara, to that point, your program can build off this, and a lot of good things can come from having this experience. Do you have that perspective? Can you have that perspective now? Or is it just frustrating because you lost?

KARA LAWSON: I think... I always toggle between, like, short term and long term. I think that's probably most coaches and programs because you're looking at what your immediate emotions are and needs are of the players and then long term, what you're trying to do.

I'm so proud of my group. I mean, we lost seven of our top nine from last year. And we're the youngest team in the ACC. We played freshmen more minutes than any team in the league. We're able to be competitive and win some big games and make it to this point.

So I have emotions right now, but, honestly, they're positive emotions more than negative ones. Just the type of year it was, how great a group they were to coach. And our future is really bright with our young players. And, yeah, they will learn from this, will grow from this. We're welcoming in a great freshmen class in the fall.

I think this experience will help motivate them in a good way to try and get back to this stage again.

Q. Coach, congratulations. You had a great season. Sorry about the tough loss today. But as you said, you said you have a lot of positive emotions right now, and you've got a phenomenal class coming in. Can you just talk about, like, what you're telling your upperclassmen right now, because this may be the end of this chapter, but it's not the end of your relationship with them, I'm sure. And so I'm just wondering what are you telling them right now? Just kind of help them through this. Because this is a chapter, but it's not over after this. And helping them understand that what they're doing right now is going to make an impact in the long run as well. And so I was wondering what you're telling them right now.

KARA LAWSON: I mean, I haven't had a ton of time to talk to them yet. But Camilla and Kennedy are two seniors that

won't be back with us next year. Honestly, I just thanked them. I thanked them for picking Duke, to come, for picking me to be their coach, for everything that they've taught our younger players, how they've helped lead our team on and off the floor this year.

So I'm just really thankful that I've had the opportunity to coach both of those young women. They're amazing, and they're going to do amazing things in their lives. So, yeah. That was more of just thanking them. I have a special relationship with each of them.

And I know they're going to be, like Kennedy said, like, they're going to be always a presence in my life. And I'm always going to be a presence in their life. And hopefully in between their busy schedules when they graduate, they'll be able to come back to some games, or if we go near where they live.

Q. I was wondering, you touched on you guys are the youngest team in the ACC. Can you talk about specific areas of development you saw between your freshmen, Jadyn and Oluchi, this season?

KARA LAWSON: Jadyn and Oluchi grew in every area. Just their overall basketball knowledge to understand, like, schemes and game plans at the college level, understanding scouts, understanding our playbook and what they're trying -- what we're trying to achieve in certain plays. And so the growth was just massive for both of those two players. They're just sponges. They're learning. They want to be good players, and they're growing each time out. I'm just proud of both of them.

We depended on both of them a lot in every game. And so to see them continue to grow in their role and take more ownership, I think that bodes well for us next year with our freshmen group. They've got a lot of experience. I'll throw Delaney in there as well. I thought she had a fantastic year for us.

And they're just going to be -- they're so much more aware now. When they come in as freshmen, they don't even know what they don't know, and they're so much more aware of why certain things matter and how focused you have to be and disciplined you have to be. I just look forward to more time with them. I'm thankful I have three more years with them. And I love those three. They're fun to coach.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We are to the end of our time. Coach, appreciate you. Thank you.

KARA LAWSON: Thank you.