

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Creighton vs UCLA

Monday, March 25, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

## Creighton Bluejays

## Jim Flanery

## Emma Ronsiek

## Lauren Jensen

### Media Conference

UCLA 67, Creighton 63

**JIM FLANERY:** Congrats to UCLA. I thought they really defended on a different level in that second half and we couldn't really get much going, and particular in the fourth quarter, and probably thought we got a little tired. I thought Cori probably did a better job of using her bench and keeping people fresh.

I thought we fought. I'm so proud of our team and just can't say enough about how much joy I get out of coaching them and great experience. I told them in the locker room, what this group has done is they have made the NCAA Tournament an expectation which is probably something that we haven't had at Creighton, and that's a credit to the work that they have put in, the way they love each other, take care of each other, and so we're super proud of them.

Again, congrats to UCLA. I thought Rice was fantastic in the second half and obviously Betts was really good in the first half. We took some chances off some kids in the second half to try to limit Betts, but then we didn't do enough to keep Rice from getting in the lane, and she really hurt us in transition.

This one will hurt but I'm proud of our group.

**Q. They were able to stop a lot of your off-ball actions in the second half. How were they able to prevent those passes from coming in that were clicking so much in the first half?**

**EMMA RONSIEK:** I thought we got a lot of open looks that they probably weren't anticipating that they were going to



give up in the first half, and I think they kind of just figured out in the second half if they wanted to turn the game around that they just couldn't do that anymore. We have so many good shooters on our team and I think that they saw that or they felt that in the first half and then kind of came out with a different type of intensity in the second.

So yeah, it was credit to their change in the second half, but yeah.

**LAUREN JENSEN:** Credit to UCLA. They made life difficult for us especially in the second half. Disrupting our offense, making it hard for us to catch and even when we did get a shot off it was contested. So they definitely ramped it up on the defensive end.

Yeah, it was tough for us to get going.

**Q. Now that the season is kind of coming to an end, how has it been to play with this group that you guys have spent so much time around?**

**LAUREN JENSEN:** It's been so awesome. I love it here. The people, you know, make it so fun. I love playing basketball. But the people are really what it's about. You know, I just couldn't be more proud of this team and what we have done this year, and what I've been able to be a part of the past three years, and I'm super grateful for it.

**EMMA RONSIEK:** I just love every teammate individually in a different way. They are all so special to me. Living with Lexi (ph) has been such an amazing experience just because we grew up together and now we finally get that opportunity to actually live with each other. Yeah, I mean, just everyone has made such an impact on my life positively, I don't think I have a bad thing to say about anyone on the campus, the staff. It's been an amazing run.

**Q. What was it like being able to play in front of your family, especially your sister, who is able to make it out this weekend?**

**EMMA RONSIEK:** I'm not sure she needed much coaxing to get out to Los Angeles. Yeah, it's awesome just to be able to play. My parents are very well-traveled. They



come to pretty much every basketball game and I can't thank them enough for all their support with me and Hannah because she plays basketball, too.

Like I said, I don't think there was much coaxing to get her out here but it's always awesome to just watch her cheer for us, cheer for me and what we're doing because they didn't do any postseason this year. But yeah, it's just awesome to see them in the stands every game.

**Q. I know this is kind of a raw moment here but I'm just curious if the emotions that are going through your heads right now are more the ones that are obvious with the season coming to an end or if it's more pride and if this is the last time you guys all play together, that you guys have accomplished a lot?**

LAUREN JENSEN: I think it's honestly all the emotions. We wanted to make it to the Sweet 16 and that really hurts. So there's a lot of emotions that you feel when you lose in the NCAA Tournament.

EMMA RONSIK: Yeah, I'd say emotions, too. Just being this close to a Sweet 16 again is kind of just soul-crushing to go in the locker room afterwards and not be celebrating with some of your best friend. So yeah, the emotions were high. They are probably going to be like this for the next few days.

**Q. I just wanted to have a quick comment about the reflection for the season, I know it's super tough tonight but you guys have accomplished so much and there's been so many accolades and ups and downs. Do you have a reflection on how the season went and what are you hoping for the future?**

JIM FLANERY: Sure. Well, yeah, I think it was -- we were kind of prisoners of the moment and you know when we went to the elite a couple years ago, it's a great season but we won a two point game in the second round and lost a two possession game in the second round tonight. It's easy to feel like we didn't quite accomplish as much but I think if you look at the balance of the season we lost one non-conference game and I think we played the 7th strongest non-conference schedule in the country and we went 9-1. We finished 15-3 in a great league, BIG EAST. Lost twice to UConn and once at Marquette who was in the tournament and then lost tonight to UCLA. Our body of work was great. We have flaws. That's what makes me proud is we play through them and we play for each other. You know, what, 26-6 is a pretty dang good year when you play in the league that we played in and you play in the non-conference that we play in. Obviously we have an experienced group. We started five seniors, bring a senior off the bench. We expected to be good. But I think we

achieved at a level that we kind of hoped for even though we're obviously disappointed tonight.

**Q. You talk about the expectations now going up. You've made three straight NCAA Tournaments. Normally in the past if you lost six seniors that would be a tough rebuilding job but with the portal and everything now, how easy do you think it could be to reload and Creighton, BIG EAST program, with everything you've accomplished?**

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, you hope it helps us in recruiting. We're not opposed to using the transfer portal but that's not something that we are necessarily going to be inasmuch as a lot of teams. I just think that's one of the things that makes our program special is that's not going to necessarily be who we are. Now I may say something different in a couple years because we want to be good but I do think that the success we've had over the last few years should help us in recruiting and we are going to have a lot of these players come back. I mean, it's not official. And you know, if somebody changes their mind but there's a good chance that the bulk of this class will be back to play and use their COVID year. So I'm not going to get into the specifics of that but it's not going to -- a lot of them will be back, and so we might not be doing as much portaling until maybe next year.

**Q. How well do you think Mal responded on the defensive end when she was struggling offensively and was there a thought of pulling her out a little earlier when they were making that just to pull back on her defensively?**

JIM FLANERY: Yeah, we have seen that a lot with Mal this year. We've had to hide her. She's a super valuable piece of what we do but we've had to hide her in some places offensively. But I thought defensively she did a really good job on Betts. She probably was our best defender on Betts. We need her length and just her versatility defensively and yeah, there's a lot of things they can do on offense but she does make good decisions. I think she had one turnover tonight but she had zero turnovers the other night against UNLV and three assists.

Sometimes it's about not making mistakes because we typically have enough scoring. But it was a little bit, I was a little bit caught in that second half, honestly, between whether we needed to play a little better offensive lineup based on the struggle we were having. But we also were having a hard time stopping, particularly Rice, and them getting in the paint a little bit more. So that's been a battle for us this year. But I think overall, Mel has really kind of figured out how to play. But we'll have to do some things to develop her so we are not necessarily quite in the

position that we've been in a lot this year.

**Q. You said you are expecting the bulk of the class to be back but in the meantime right now looking back on what has already been accomplished, I'm just curious about what are going to be the hard things to forget about coaching this group, especially all six of them together and what they have been able to do to not only elevate this program but like you mentioned, the joy they have played with in doing it with the group?**

JIM FLANERY: Our strength coach, Brad Schmidt, I always open the locker room during the last game so anybody can say anything, coaches, staff, players. It's kind of an open forum. He talked about how working with them makes him a better person, and I think that's, you know -- you know me, after I finish talking, and I heard what Brad said, I kind of had to jump back in because I do think that's -- when you love your work life, it really helps the rest of your life. I feel like this group makes it really easy for me because I love my work life and most of that has to do with the way that they are.

So I think -- not to get too sappy but I think it makes me a better husband and a better father and all those things, and I think everybody on our staff would say the same thing. Because when you're surrounded by people who are as good as human beings as the ones I'm surrounded by it, makes it easy to leave work and be happy.

So I'm super thankful to have gotten to coach this group, and to play a program as good as UCLA down to the wire on the road, is a testament to how hard they work and how together that they are.

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