

Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Belmont vs Villanova

Monday, March 31, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

Villanova Wildcats

Denise Dillon

Maddie Webber

Semifinal Postgame Press Conference



a lot.

It shows us where we are and what we need to get better at, and it kind of helps coming here because all the teams are different. They are all from different conferences. That helps a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about the experience that you got this year and how you hope to apply that moving forward, and what's your biggest takeaway of this entire season?

MADDIE WEBBER: I mean, just coming in with a new team. There's a lot of young players on the team, too. So just like being a leader for them and continuing to develop is the biggest thing.

I think we are all just so close, and I guess the biggest thing for us is just staying connected like we did all season in big games like Saint Joe's, just we are going to remember forever.

Q. Both these teams had to survive some tough moments to get here. Does that sort of thing carry over, what you've had to do just to get here?

DENISE DILLON: Absolutely. That's just recognizing the opportunity to be here, to actually be playing. You look at that, Maddie just brought it up, the Saint Joe's game. We are down, two-possession game with 1:10 and end up winning the game.

In their case, they were down significantly. Belmont was down to Northern Arizona and make a play at the last second for the win after coming back from an incredible deficit. So you don't go away. You want to keep playing and keep fighting. I think you just hope it's a little bit cleaner. For us, I don't really feel like we got into a great rhythm throughout the competition, and Belmont stayed true to just being aggressive.

The 50/50 ball was mentioned and just getting after loose balls or rebounds that we would like to see back, as opposed to thinking that shots are going to start falling.

Belmont 66, Villanova 57

DENISE DILLON: Well, congratulations to Belmont. It was a heck of a battle. They are a great team, and they showed it again today. As I just talked with our team, I couldn't be more proud of our Wildcats, and being here and just continue to stretch the season out and being able to play another game with them.

So proud of each and every one of them, and a special year it was for sure.

Q. First of all, congratulations on getting back here again. The first half you guys were in the game playing hard. The second half, I thought you guys really had trouble at 50/50 balls and a lot of times you were going East and West instead of north and south. What was Belmont doing that changed your game a little bit?

MADDIE WEBBER: Yeah, I mean, I just think the whole game, they were consistent with their intensity. I think we were up and down at times, which obviously doesn't help. I would just say that was the biggest thing in the game.

Q. Coming off the BIG EAST, hard conference with Connecticut, and they are in the nationals, the final, how difficult and rewarding is it after playing in that conference knowing you're going to have a fight every night and you get into the WBIT and you're going to have that same thing again?

MADDIE WEBBER: Yeah, it helps a lot because all the teams are really different. Some days can be easier than others. But you never know what you're going to get, really, and then obviously competing against UConn helps



Yeah, we knew what it took to get here. Just have to find a different way to finish it off.

Q. We talked a little bit about north, south, east, west, and their 50/50, I thought they were superior at that the second half of the game. What did you think about that? I saw one time you let another coach talk to them. I remember you saying, Get the rebound, pull it down hard, let's go.

DENISE DILLON: Certainly there's a couple possessions, like we are so big on the rebounding all foul shots. We gave up two offensive rebounds at the foul line, and that's something we hone in on. Fortunately they don't have a practice tomorrow, because typically we have a 6-4-6 if we give up an offensive rebound at the foul line. So to give up to two; so it just showed a little bit of lack of focus. And just getting beat to that possession.

And you said, some loose balls, instead of getting tied up and staying up with the possession. So a few you'd certainly like to get back. But just got worn out a little bit, and it definitely went their way.

Q. What's it going to take for your program to get into the NCAA?

DENISE DILLON: Yeah, well, as I said, super proud of this group for coming together, a lot of new faces, a lot of new players. Maddie Webber didn't even play in this tournament last year due to a knee injury. The only two who played were Maddie Burke and Kaitlyn Orihel.

So for them to just continue progress and buy in to what we do, what we are about, and each other, playing for each other, gives you opportunities to play postseason.

So for us it's continue to develop these young players and get the others ready. We have a good group coming in, and just be excited about it.

But I want to celebrate this team and what they accomplished and what they did. It was a long season, of course. But for us starting back in August, the opportunity to go to Italy definitely gave us a chance to get to know each other, the chemistry and camaraderie, and just so many changes.

We dedicate this season to our guy, Michael Gaynor, and it was a tough year for us losing him and just that full circle. But the perspective and the buy-in to, it's a game, you play, you give everything you have, you give everything to the program and the university; you'll be rewarded.

I have been rewarded with a great group, and I think they

were rewarded with a successful season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

