

2008 NCAA® DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
Greensboro Coliseum • Greensboro, NC
Monday, March 31, 2008

CLOSED PRACTICE QUOTES – GREENSBORO REGIONAL
#1 CONNECTICUT

HEAD COACH GENO AURIEMMA

Opening Remarks:

"I wish we were playing tomorrow at noon like we did yesterday. I think sitting around until 9 p.m. and figuring out what to do all day long will be hard. But I know it can't come soon enough. We've been waiting since last year at this time and I'm just thrilled that we have the opportunity to be back in that situation again."

On status of Renee Montgomery and Tina Charles:

"Both players practiced today. Obviously, they got banged around a little bit yesterday, but they'll be ready to go tomorrow. That won't be an issue."

On Maya Moore versus Essence Carson matchup:

"It's hopefully never about one player, It's never about if you stop one player, you stop Connecticut. For everything that you do, if you concentrate on one individual, you give up something else and that's what makes you a good team -- whether you have the ability to rely on your player, not just one of them. As good as Essence is and as good as Maya is — and I'm sure they'll have some good battles tomorrow — it's going to come down to a lot more than that."

On having to go through Rutgers to reach the national semifinals:

"I think it would be fitting to go through anybody at this time of the year. You're not really worried about who the opponent is. It's just another team on the road of where you hope to get. If you win that game tomorrow night, it feels the same regardless of who it is."

"The things that we've been through as a team this year, I don't know if any other team in the country has had to go through. What we've had to adjust to and cope with is as much as anybody else has had to cope with. I'm proud of them. They've never felt sorry for themselves. They've never pouted about 'why me?' or 'woe is me.' They never became martyrs or victims; it was just 'let's play.' That's what we do and that's what we're going to do tomorrow night. We're going to do the same thing regardless of who the opponent is."

On differences between UConn-Rutgers rivalry and UConn-Tennessee rivalry:

"I think that's one of the fascinating things about being in a league because if you get a rivalry that's born in a league, it's ongoing. It's twice every year. You know them better than anybody else and they know you better than anybody else. There's just an intensity level that the kids look forward to and the coaches look forward to."

"I think in the last 10 years there's been a lot of drama surrounding the [UConn-Rutgers] games for a lot of different reasons. We've been the best team in the league for a long, long time and you know you can't stay on top forever. You do enjoy the fact that people take shots at you. That's what it's all about. It's no fun if you're on top and everyone's afraid of you. I don't want it to be like that. I think the more people that take a shot at you, the better you are and the more you improve. I think Rutgers has done it for the longest time and more consistently than other teams. Their record against us probably doesn't show that. But I think they've been the team that's put themselves in the position to challenge us for the



Big East Championship every year. Based on what's going on with them in recruiting, I don't know that it's going to change anytime soon. I don't think there's a team in the country that you could play – if you only played them once and they weren't in your league – that could rival what's going on in the Big East right now between us and Rutgers."

On Brittany Hunter...

"There was never any doubt that Brittany wasn't going to come here (Connecticut). When she told me she wanted to come to Connecticut and then circumstances didn't allow that, I was upset about it. I also thought it was only a matter of time. And it was disappointing hearing that even after that operation there was a chance she could never play. To see where she is today and to know what she's been through; the best way to answer it is I ask every day where she is today. I never get 'she's good to go the whole practice'. It is usually a yes, no, maybe, we'll see. We've had to manage that. And I am ok with that because I would rather see her be able to walk five years from now. It's really frustrating to her, but I've seen a different attitude since the Big East tournament where she understands that it's coming to an end and there's really no amount of pain that will keep her off the court."

On a low-scoring game tomorrow...

"It's impossible to avoid that when you play Rutgers. It's like playing Villanova in some respects. When the team is very deliberate on offense and you're not going to get your hands on the ball, you know they aren't going to give up 90 (points) because you aren't going to get enough possessions. Part of what makes their defense really good is you don't get the ball that often. The danger is that you can get frustrated and antsy. When you play Rutgers, you have to grind it out and hope you can force the tempo a little bit. If we had a full team, we could throw more bodies out there. But we don't, so we're going to have to do what we can do."

On this year's Rutgers team compared to previous teams of the past...

"They have great guard play, but they've always had great guard play. They are very deliberate in getting the shot that they want, this year especially. They have three guards on the perimeter and it's Ketia (Swanier) Renee (Montgomery) and Maya Moore against their three perimeter players. I think we have the best three perimeter players in the country and I think Rutgers is the only team that can match that."

On if Rutgers has toughened up the Connecticut program...

"The games that we played in The RAC were like games we played anywhere, but what was different was that the stuff that Rutgers kids talked about was a lot bigger than their game (in the beginning). That's what caused the reaction on our side. You're not used to having someone who hasn't won anything talk like that. As the years went on and the quality of their players got better and better, they can back up some of the things they were talking about. Now, you can't just walk in there and think, 'yeah, we're good enough.' You have to be better than good enough. You do have to be a little tougher, a little more hard-nosed. As Rutgers teams got better and better, and the fans became more passionate, you better be tough to play there and that's the case for any team."

On what Auriemma will take away from this year's team...

"I think Keisha (Swanier) taking the shot at LSU this year and not just taking it, but making the shot, not just having the guts to take it. She's come a long way. The way Charde (Houston) is playing right now, which I didn't think was possible. How far Brittany (Hunter) has come, which I didn't think was possible. The picture of Mel (Thomas) sitting there with tears in her eyes at Syracuse knowing her career was over. Regardless of what happens, short of lifting up the National Championship trophy, I don't think anything for me will be more powerful as those things."