

**March 23, 2008**



An interview with:

**HARTFORD  
COACH JENNIFER RIZZOTTI  
MARYLYNNE SCHAEFER  
DANIELLE HOOD  
LISA ETIENNE**

THE MODERATOR: No. 23, Lisa Etienne, No. 24, Danielle Hood, and No. 33, MaryLynne Schafer, and the head coach of the Hartford Hawks, Jennifer, Rizzotti. Coach, would you please open up with a comment, and then we'll open it up.

COACH RIZZOTTI: Thanks for being here. We're excited to be playing another day, and it's what our purpose was coming down here, to advance in the NCAA tournament. Yesterday we broke our school record for wins with 28 on the season, so I'm proud of the adversity we've handled throughout the year and the amount of wins we've been able to get against quality competition, and certainly Syracuse was one of the hardest teams we've played. We're excited to be playing another game, and we know Texas A&M is going to be tougher, but we're certainly up for the challenge.

**Q. MaryLynne, how late did you stay up to watch yourself on ESPN?**

MARYLYNNE SCHAEFER: I actually went to sleep. We saw it at dinner I think once and then I've had family tell me about it later but I haven't had an opportunity to see it again.

**Q. MaryLynne, I was down at Tampa and Ty Rogers from western Kentucky hit a shot and he said he went back and had 172 text messages waiting for him. I wondered if you**

**had any and if you could tell me the interesting part of that.**

MARYLYNNE SCHAEFER: I had 10 or 12, family and friends, old AAU teammates, people I've come in contact with. It was nice to have that support.

**Q. Danielle, I would like you to talk about their man-to-man defense versus the zone defenses you've been facing lately and how you guys plan to -- is that more beneficial for you or less?**

DANIELLE HOOD: I think we play better against man but, I mean, we've definitely beat teams who play us in zone so it's good to play a team that plays us in man so we can go back to running our plays that we love to run so we're excited.

**Q. Coach, can you talk about when you played for Coach Blair? He talked about when you played for him in the Jones Cup.**

COACH RIZZOTTI: I don't know any secrets, but I feel like I know what his -- obviously watching them but knowing from -- playing for him his team is going to play really hard. The way that he coaches and the respect that he shows for his players, I think, makes them want to play hard for him. He's not the type of guy who berates kids, he's encouraging, but he knows how to get you to play hard, and he demands the right things, and you can see in the discipline that they play with that they listen and they buy in.

It's certainly worked for them. They're a phenomenal basketball team, certainly one of the best in the country, and we're excited about having a chance to play against them and, like Hood said, test out our man sets now, instead of forty minutes of zone. But they're one of the best man-to-man teams in the country, and it's going to be a battle, and we're going to have to be ready for it.

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**Q. Jennifer, Texas A&M people talked about going into this tournament, it was a big year for them; they needed to get to the Sweet 16. What could a win like this do for your program?**

COACH RIZZOTTI: Obviously it takes us to a level we've never been before and gives us the national exposure that this group of girls has been seeking. We've been fighting to be in the Top 25 all year; we've been on the cusp of it. We've played a tough schedule to give us consideration as an at-large bid team, which I think we did, even if we weren't to win our championship, and, you know, this team has been to this point before, MaryLynne and Danielle and -- not Lisa as a player but she was part of the team.

They've played in the second round of the NCAA tournament. For us it's a chance to take a step further, and I know there is nothing more that Danielle and the players want more than a birth to the Sweet 16.

So I think for any team in the country getting to the Sweet 16 is a big feat. So as much as it means to them, it means that much to us, as well, and it can do wonders for the exposure of our program and what we're trying to do to get to the NCAA every year, and not only get there but be a team that wins in it. It's certainly going to help us in that cause.

**Q. Lisa, the post players obviously have been your biggest offense most of the year. The guards have broken out in the last few games. Can you talk about that a little bit, your mindsets as guards, you and MaryLynne, what you guys have been doing differently?**

LISA ETIENNE: I think we've been doing what we've been doing all year, but a lot of teams have focused more on our post players, so we're getting a lot of open shots and more opportunities to shoot and score, so I think we're stepping up and knocking down shots right now.

**Q. Danielle, your game went down to the wire, and I think all the starters played over 30 minutes. Texas A&M, nobody played more than 25 minutes. Even with a day off, does that make a difference at this point in the season?**

DANIELLE HOOD: I think it makes a big difference. Coach Rizzotti can go deep in her bench, and when everyone can play, it limits your minutes and keeps you fresh. So when other

teams have to play their starting five for over 30 minutes, they're going to be more tired than we are.

COACH RIZZOTTI: Don't forget, Danielle only played 18 minutes, because she was in foul trouble the whole game, so she should be plenty fresh. Maybe she can give Lisa and Beverly and MaryLynne a break!

Certainly it may make a difference, but mentally it shouldn't. You're playing for everything right now, and we talked about this in our America East tournament, we were the fresher team because we were able to play people less. But never underestimate an opponent, because what they have in their heart and their effort can overcome any type of physical fatigue, and we might have to count on a few more guys off the bench this time.

I think Lisa and Erica and MaryLynne are strong enough to play 30 and come back and play another 30 if we need them to, but hopefully we'll have some of your younger guys ready as well.

**Q. Jen, I wanted to ask you about preparation this time, vis-a-vis after knocking off Temple and going to Georgia -- against Georgia, is your team more mature this time? Are you better ready? Did you feel that you were ready last time? Could you talk about that?**

COACH RIZZOTTI: Honestly, I probably feel like our coaching staff is more ready this time around. I think that when we beat Temple there was such an excitement about it, that -- not that we didn't prepare for Georgia, but it might not have been to the degree we would with one day in between.

And I feel like this time we learned from that, and we had been watching tape on Texas A&M before we played Syracuse -- not me, but someone on my staff -- to make sure we were prepared and ready. And just like during the season when you only have one game, or in the case of a tournament like Hawaii or the America East tournament, you don't have any days to prepare, you still as a coaching staff know what to expect, and you can convey that to your players.

These guys adjust well. They can adjust to a team in shootaround if we need them to. That's what we did out in Hawaii, and they were ready when we had to play Virginia on the third day, and it's similar to that except we got an extra

hour and a half today, and we are going from zone to man-to-man, and a "man" like we've probably never seen.

I feel confident that our kids have worked hard all year to prepare for this moment, and our guards are going to have to be ready to handle the pressure, and our posts are going to have to be effective certainly in the paint and also rebounding, but I think our team is more prepared for this moment than they were two years ago, definitely.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?  
Coach, student athletes, thank you very much.  
Best wishes.

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