

LARSON PRAISES UCONN WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

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WASHINGTON, D.C.-U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) today praised the University of Connecticut Women's basketball team following their national championship victory Tuesday evening. The following comments were included in the Congressional Record:

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of women's basketball and to pay tribute to the University of Connecticut women's basketball team.

The Huskies have won 76 of their last 77 games including a record breaking 70 wins in a row on their way to winning their second national title on April 8, 2003. They are the first women's basketball team ever to win the national championship without a senior on the team. They achieved this distinction by defeating outstanding teams from Texas and Tennessee in the Final Four.

Geno Auriemma, Chris Dailey, their assistants, Lew Perkins, and the entire UConn program are to be commended for their continued pursuit of excellence both on and off the basketball court. They are a credit to women's sports and college athletics in general.

Coach Auriemma paid a great tribute to Pat Summitt and the Tennessee team, citing that UConn beat the best women's basketball program in the country. Though his Huskies were victorious, the real winner was women's athletics.

With all the talk about changing Title IX, this Final Four bears testimony on the wisdom of that policy. Texas, Duke, Tennessee, and Connecticut brought women's basketball to another level. For purists who follow sports, its reminiscent of baseball in the 1950s and 60s. There is a purity about the women's game that is unique and endearing and transcends gender.

For the University of Connecticut team, the first ever group of all underclassmen to win the national title, what a lasting tribute to your dedication, stamina, spirit, and will to win.

They say that teams are an extension of their coach. Clearly the UConn women's program is personified in Coach Auriemma and in their leader Diana Taurasi. The Supremes had Diana Ross, the British had Princess Diana. Connecticut has Diana Taurasi, simply the best women's basketball player in the country.

While Diana Taurasi at times carried this team on her back, the championship could not have been won without a team effort. Ann Strother will be remembered for shaking off a tough tournament to play her best game in the biggest game. The flawless ball handling and clutch three pointers by Maria Conlon freed Taurasi to focus on shooting and driving to the basket. The solid inside play of Jessica Moore, Barbara Turner, and Willnett Crockett kept the offense balanced and the defense off guard. And who will forget Ashley Battle's steal of the ball to seal the victory. Not to be overlooked are the contributions throughout the year of Morgan Valley, Ashley Valley, Stacey Marron, and Nicole Wolff.

I only hope Geno and Kathy, Chris Dailey, and all the coaches get to relax and enjoy the moment, because the expectation for a three-peat has already started.

Lastly, this great game with great teams was played out by young women on a national stage in what will go down as a tournament for the ages, and will inspire countless dreams of girls and boys who aspire to excel in sports and seize the moment.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in paying tribute to the University of Connecticut's fourth women's basketball national championship and celebrating the game of women's basketball and the continued success of women's athletics.

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