

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Nevada Wolf Pack

Steve Alford

Tyler Rolison

Kobe Sanders

Postgame Press Conference

NEVADA 86, FRESNO STATE 71

Q. We're ready to begin with Nevada. Coach, we can start with you and get some thoughts on today's game.

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, really proud of our guys. They've been working, and we talk about stacking days and they've been doing that. We just haven't been getting a lot of super rewards out of it. We're banged up, and yet I think the guys have really responded in a big way, and the two guys next to me, in the last ten games, both of them have raised their level of play and Nick's had to raise his level of play and now we're starting to get bench production.

I thought Chuck was great off the bench tonight. So it's been good to see guys come into some different roles here late in the season, but it's been a season where we haven't won in the close games, and sometimes that happens, but I've been very proud of their effort, and obviously when you get to this point you want to be playing tomorrow and we get a chance to do that.

Q. Tyler, it seems like the team was getting production from everywhere. How important is it in this setting to have that ability for everyone to contribute?

TYLER ROLISON: I think Coach did good just emphasizing it's a new season. So it's 0-0. So I think our main focus was just taking it game by game and really dialing in by who we're playing and taking it step by step.

Q. Kobe, you were on triple-double watch for a little bit tonight. What was your approach to this game and what was working for you?

KOBE SANDERS: It was a team effort. Everybody was



hot in the beginning and I was getting everybody involved. They made my job easy. When Chuck hits three threes in a row, it makes us all look good. My guys making it easy for me, and then it opened up the floor for me to get going in the second half.

Q. Kobe, it felt like there was a different sense of urgency from the jump. Did it feel like that way to you?

KOBE SANDERS: Most definitely. Anytime you start a new season, a new era of the season, you definitely have a different type of energy, and knowing we got to go out there and win four games in a row, I believe we all think we could do it. I think our season didn't go as we planned, but it's a new season.

Q. How important was it for you to be able to try and adjust, 14 of your 17 points coming into the second half?

KOBE SANDERS: I felt like it was easy. My team got me involved and everybody was going. So it's easy once you see one bucket go in, then they all start falling.

Q. Tyler, just how hungry was this team to be able to try and come out and get a win today despite how the regular season ended?

TYLER ROLISON: I think it was very important because we all knew what this game meant to us and what we were capable of doing. So I just think that was our main focus this game.

Q. To be able to dominate in the post today for Nick, who had a big game as well, and Justin McBride, how important was their production in the paint?

TYLER ROLISON: I think we all know what they're capable of doing, so we just put our trust and let them rock out when we give them the ball. We just know they're capable of scoring.

Q. I know it's a quick turnaround. What do you



remember from when you faced Colorado State? I know it was a little while ago. What do you guys believe you can do tomorrow?

TYLER ROLISON: Start off how we started this game. Just play hard, guard and run the floor. I think we'll be able to beat them.

KOBE SANDERS: I think both games against Colorado State were close games, and I think we know what we could do and know what we're capable of.

MODERATOR: Questions for the coach?

Q. Coach, nine players on the score sheet tonight. Eight of them had at least five points. How successful can this team be when it's spread around like that?

STEVE ALFORD: I thought we played well. We know Tré's been out. Daniel is out. And now K.J. is out.

It's just been one of those things, and yet guys have stepped up and they've played hard, and that's what we appreciate. They're giving great effort. Some of them are getting forced into some roles maybe they're not even ready for yet, and yet they're giving us everything we've got.

We're doing some things now changing on the fly of a guy that maybe is a center is now playing in the 4 spot and a 4 man is playing a 3 spot. It's all different defenses and offenses they're trying to get to learn on the fly.

Late in the season that's not easy, and these guys just continue to fight, and that's all we're asking. We obviously know each day it gets harder. This time of year you want to be going into the next day, and we've got a game under our belts now, and now we got to come after a very, very good Colorado State team.

Q. Chuck maybe one of those guys that you were talking about, 11 points early on, three threes in a row to build that lead. Take me through what you saw from him in that period.

STEVE ALFORD: Well, just somebody that hadn't played in a Mountain West tournament before, in your first 20 minutes, to do what he did is impressive, and we needed that. I think that helped get us the double-digit lead that we needed in the first half. It kind of calmed our guys a little bit, and we could sense that, and he can really guard. So I liked his energy the whole night. He did a really good job for us.

Q. The whole second half they never got to within 10.

What was the key for you to keep them outside arm's reach?

STEVE ALFORD: Just make shots. Our offense was good. We scored 44 and 42, and our defense, other than maybe the last couple minutes where they made some shots in the last couple minutes, I thought our defense was really good. I thought we challenged things. I thought we did some really good things on both ends. We had 19 assists, 10 turnovers. We won the rebound war. We just did a lot of good things, and that was good to see.

Q. Coach, congratulations on win No. 700. Does this one feel any different?

STEVE ALFORD: No. Just very, very thankful and grateful. It's been an incredible journey. The Lord has blessed our family in basketball beyond belief. And obviously a year that -- and this year, we thought we would have had this a long time ago. But we did.

Last year, we won almost every close game, every one-, two-possession game we won. And this year has been a year where we've lost probably eight of those and won one, the VCU game.

It's one of those things that happened. Maybe it's a missed foul shot or it's a missed block-out or whatever it may be, making those winning plays late.

But these guys have just continued to really play hard, and even through the -- what I've been impressed with is all the adversity they've gone through, they've grown closer together as a team, and that's all you ask for as a coach, that you've got a good collective unit.

Now they're dealing with injuries, and I feel for K.J. We've got three seniors now that -- Tré Coleman that doesn't get to play his last three weeks. You got Daniel Foster that doesn't get to do the same. And now you got K.J. who was having one of his better games, and now he doesn't get to play. And that's never a lot of fun.

But you're just appreciative of everything they've done. And to get to this milestone, you've gotta have not just good players, you've gotta have incredible staffs. And all along my journey and path that the good Lord has put me on, I've been very fortunate to work with really good people, with really good players, and they deserve the majority of that credit.

Q. How do you feel like K.J. Hymes was able to step into this role here tonight and to have a sense of urgency early on?



STEVE ALFORD: Well, we had a very spirited halftime. I didn't know if I'd make it to the next game, just because of passing out or something. So we had a very spirited halftime at San Diego State because I didn't think our posts were doing anything. And K.J. really stepped up in a big way, and I thought Jeriah stepped up in a big way. And we needed that just to play the way we did in the second half at San Diego State to have some kind of momentum coming into here.

If you get beat 40, you're not going to have much momentum coming in here. So to be able to play well in that second half was big, and K.J. had a lot to do with that. Jeriah had a lot to do with that. And I thought Brandon played much better tonight, and that's going to be crucial going forward because now as we move forward in this thing, we lose a big. We've lost two guards, now we lose a big. It's next man up. Brandon's minutes gotta go up, Justin's minutes gotta go up, and obviously Jeriah has got to be ready to play.

But I thought K.J. really responded last week, and he continued that into this game.

Q. I'm sure you would have liked to have gotten a bye, but do you feel like having this first-round game under your belt maybe loosens up your guys a little bit more heading into tomorrow?

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah. Every year is different. Sometimes, it's still you gotta win. If you're going to continue, you gotta win four and four or you gotta win three and three. Last year, we had the bye, and we got Colorado State, who, like us, had to win that first game, and they won and then they punched us in the face last year.

So now it's like a flip. Now we've got that extra game that we gotta play just to get to the quarters. But in a league like this, you get to the quarters, anything can happen, and we've had our share of hard luck. We just gotta hope that we can compete and do the things we can do to get in the last five minutes and have a good shot of winning.

Q. How important was that 22-3 run early on in just helping set the tone, as well, and also for you guys to be able to put together a full 40 minutes?

STEVE ALFORD: Well, it was crucial because, like I said, losing two or three games in a row, especially how we played at San Diego State in the first half, they practiced well and they prepared well, but they're still coming off that, you still lost. You gotta get yourself off the mat, and that's never easy.

We've got a lot of guys that haven't played in this tournament, and so that was some issues going in, and that's why I was so proud of Chuck, and Kobe in the second half was huge.

What TR has been doing over the last month has been incredible, and from where he's come in January to where he is now, he he's doing a phenomenal job of running our show, and that has helped Kobe because we're able to put Kobe off the ball a little bit now and Kobe is able to score the ball at the level he can score, and a lot of that's been because of TR.

Q. It's been a little while since you've seen the Rams. What do you remember from those two games off the top of your head?

STEVE ALFORD: Just a tough physical team. Obviously, very well-coached. All teams in our league are. And Niko does a tremendous job. His staff does a tremendous job. I think Clifford is one of the one-two best. If there were two guys, it's Dent and him in my opinion.

When you just talk about the elite of our league, and Clifford has been tremendous and he's playing at a high level. He's a guy that can get a triple-double from the guard position. We're proud of Kobe because he nearly got a triple-double tonight from the guard position.

They have a lot of really good solid players. There's really nobody you can play off of. They're very hardworking. And each night, it could be somebody different; Evans, Lake. A lot of different guys can hurt you, and they're very physical up front.

So we know we got our hands full, but we're excited to get back, get some dinner in us and get to work.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you for your time.

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