

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 14, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Utah State Aggies

Coach Jerrod Calhoun

Ian Martinez

Mason Falslev

Postgame Press Conference



I thought that was a big part of it.

Q. Ian, how much are you trying to outrun UNLV in this knowing they were a bit thin in their lineup? How much were you trying to keep the pace up and wear them out?

IAN MARTINEZ: That's always an emphasis for us, always trying to outrun every team. One of our strengths is to try and get in transition, so if we could focus on getting stops and get in transition we know we can be in our element and probably win the game.

Q. Mason or Ian, can you talk about the fouls? So many called. How did you keep the rhythm going?

MASON FALSLEV: It's hard, especially when we think we're keeping our hands up. But that's their whole game plan, was to isolate and attack us and get to the free throw line, and they did a good job of that. We gotta do better in not fouling.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for coming. We will let the student-athletes go.

Q. Coach, what did you like about Karson in the second half bringing the energy?

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, I mean, he gets 9 and 6. If you watch our team play that's what he's done all year. He went through a little bit of a slump, but he's had a tremendous sophomore season.

I told him the other day if we looked at where he came from last year to now, extremely proud of where he's come. That three was big. I think that put us up 11 or 13 points and it really got our guys going.

He provides that. I think every team needs a player like Karson Templin. He's going only going to get better, right? He's only a sophomore.

Q. You forced them to shoot 3 for 55 on the night. Was it that the shots weren't falling for them, or was

Utah State 70, UNLV 58

THE MODERATOR: For Utah State, we have Ian Martinez, Mason Falslev, Coach?

JERROD CALHOUN: Proud of our guys, obviously it's tournament time, it's survive and advance. Been watching all these games inside the Thomas and MAAC and nobody is really scoring the basketball. So it's either really bad offense or really good defenses.

We were a bit of a train wreck tonight with 12 assists, 15 turnovers. Uncharacteristic of our group, but as I told them, proud of the fact that we are +4 on the glass and imposed our will.

So we will take it, and obviously we hope these questions are quick because it's extremely late and we're all going to be tired.

Q. Mason, you guys got off to a quick start, you in particular. You had you guys' first four assist. How great was it for you to spread the ball around and get the offense going?

MASON FALSLEV: It's credit to our big guys, really. All I had to do was throw it over there, so that's what happened.

Q. Ian, what goes into the first run for you guys, was there an adjustment?

IAN MARTINEZ: We had to come out with the right mindset. We needed to get stops, get in transition, and be able to execute and be let their physicality affect us on offense.



there something that was working exceptionally well for you guys?

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, you know, I don't know if Coach Kruger has got enough credit over the last seven or eight games. Thomas hurt, Rishwain hurt. I thought he's done a masterful job of rallying his team, right?

They really battled the last eight games of the season. That's not easy to do with that many injuries. That's coaching. That's leadership. That's obviously buy-in from his group.

We told our guys if we're going to advance not only in this tournament but in March, we gotta quit being so finesse. We've got to be physical. We've got to be nasty. We've got to learn to win in different ways, right?

We've got one of the best offenses in the country. Let's call it like it is. We're 16th overall on offense, but you've got to play both sides of the ball.

So we have made adjustments in our defense. The last two games if you look at our numbers, they've been terrific. Moving forward when we recruit, we will recruit longer, athletic guys, right?

It's our first year in the league and obviously our NIL is going to go up as well, right? You need real money to get that size. I'm really proud of our NIL collective. We're making great strides. We're opting in, and we're going to take that next step as a program.

So we're going to be able to get some really good guys in our freshman class that we have signed is the best in school history, and we have two or three guys that are 6'9".

That's what Coach Kruger has, and they present a lot of problems. If we're going to keep advancing we've gotta guard.

And I'm really happy for our guys. It shows when you do it in practice you can do it in a game

Q. I asked Ian about the 17 run in the game. How important was it that it happened and that it came from a bit of everywhere?

JERROD CALHOUN: That's who we are. Tucker carried us for a while. Dexter just didn't have it tonight; he was 1 of 7; he had a lot of open looks. Deyton Albury wasn't at his best.

If we're going to beat Colorado State and we are going to win, you know, I thought Aubin Gateretse played really

hard. Stats don't totally show it. Eight rebounds is really good.

But we need two out of our five starters to step up for tomorrow. You know, Coach Medved's group is playing really well.

I've told NBA guys, you guys are crazy if you don't take him in the first round. I think he's that good. He's a really, really good player. They've won 8 in a row, or 9 after tonight, and they're humming.

Their offense is humming. Where they don't get enough credit is their defense. Our offense has got to be much better if we're going to win the game.

Q. You guys three had almost at forty minutes. Did you shape your defense with that in the notion that you had three guys on the other team basically playing the entire game?

JERROD CALHOUN: We knew that going in. And I watched Kevin's talk. He knew we were going to press. They were prepared for it. Deyton and Drake wore on them late, but his group only had eight turnovers, so they did a good job.

Henley is a phenomenal player. He's a guy that fit coach's system at UNLV. When Dedan went out he shot 47 from the 3, averaged 16 points per game. He was really good for them. That kid is going to be an stud here at UN LV.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the late hour. What are your thoughts on this format where you're going to play a game at 8:30, another one at 9:00 or 9:30 and come back at 3:00. It's three games in 43 hours. In this era of student-athlete welfare is it fair to make the students do this?

JERROD CALHOUN: No, not at all. I think that's a great question. But you know what rules the world right now, right, is TV and money, right? That's what college athletes is about.

I don't know of it's a TV deal or what it is, but at the end of the day we got to play when we're asked to play. I know this, our Commissioner and their staff here at the Mountain West, I've been part of the Big East, we've won the of the Big East when I was at West Virginia. This tournament is as well run as any tournament. From the time you walk in to shootaround, to the time you leave the building, these workers, very, very organized.

I've been impressed with what's going on here in the Mountain West. So I don't think we have a lot to do with



that as a league. We have to go on when TV dictates that, but it's not fair to anybody.

What hurts are the teams that, you know, make the NCAA Tournament. We're going to be beat up come next week.

Q. Coach, how impressed are you with your fan base and the league in general, just of the talent and the coaching?

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, well, you know, to see those students over 500 students come here is just absolutely incredible. Our marketing team, Bobby is in here and his group has done an unbelievable job with The Herd for a number of years, not just this year.

We've got the best students in the country, right? It's a shame we can't put 'em down low. That would be the next step. I don't know if we gotta pay for more to get them down lower. You could see 'em up there, you could see our fans wrapped all the way around.

That's what makes Utah State Utah State one of the best jobs in the country. If you have a fan base that expects to win in March, but you see that at Viejas, and at The Pit. I was really impressed. I told Nico, if I was him I would never leave. Fort Collins is an unbelievable town. He's done an unbelievable job. Their fan base. Downtown area, my wife and kids and I walked around. That's a big-time set-up.

Boise State, what Leon built since he's been there. There are some unbelievable fan bases in the Mountain West. The players are what make it. Donovan Dent, you watch that guy in a pick and roll. I don't know how you guard him, right? You watch Clifford in isos; you watch Falslev and Martinez coming off pin downs. Bear Cherry is a great player.

So this league is really good. I hope we get four or five teams, I don't know how many we will get in and hopefully we will all get better seeds. Last year the league got it handed to them with the bids.

We will see what happens here after this tournament who gets in but there's a whole bunch of teams that I think can advance in March.

Q. Is there anything new you can say about Mason Falslev? This game, 15 points, 9 rebounds, 6 assists. It seemed like a lot of his big plays were getting, I don't know if they were 50/50 balls or 30/70 balls where he just kind of made something out of nothing.

JERROD CALHOUN: I get asked that a lot, what makes

Falslev so valuable to your team. It's his competitive edge, right? If you don't have a competitive edge in college basketball, college football, I don't care what sport it is, you're going to struggle.

That kid would give you an elbow to try to win a card game. He would give you an elbow to win a ping-pong game. He wants to win in everything he does and he wills us to a lot of wins. You saw it in Orlando when we won the MTE. He carried us. Tonight his tenacity and his next level of competitiveness I thought was incredible.

Q. You had 28 points in the paint tonight. That's been a thing this year being undersized against other teams. What was working?

JERROD CALHOUN: It's back to the NIL, right? Everybody says, hey, we want bigs, you gotta pay for bigs. The reality of it is in college basketball you've got to have NIL money on the frontline.

I thought Gatereste and KT battled. It's an area we have struggled at all year and it's an area we're going to clean up. We're going to get a really good transfer in the portal but those two guys do it by committee. Isaac Johnson has to be ready to go tomorrow. Isaac Davis will play tomorrow.

We're going to need all hands on deck, but I thought those kids battled.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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