

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**New Mexico Lobos**

**Coach Eric Olen**

**Deyton Albury**

**Luke Haupt**

Postgame Press Conference



San Diego State 64, New Mexico 62

THE MODERATOR: For New Mexico we have student-athletes Deyton Albury, Luke Haupt, Coach Eric Olen. Coach, your thoughts on today's game?

ERIC OLEN: Obviously a disappointing result. Congrats to San Diego State. You know, I thought that was a pretty good college basketball game. Obviously our locker room is disappointed to come out on the wrong end of that, but really proud of our effort.

I thought we fought and competed, gave ourselves a chance. You know, we knew it was going to come down to a couple of plays at the end against a really good team. First two games were similar in terms of one possession can go either way. Ultimately, we didn't get that done.

But, again, just really proud of our group. Appreciate all the fans, Lobo Nation that came out to support us. Pitt West is a real thing, and they certainly helped us. I think that our guys -- I know that our guys really appreciate that. They appreciate the support they've gotten all season from our fans. I know that they don't take that for granted.

You know, again, we have a disappointed locker room, and we're prod of their effort.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Either one of you, or both, I want to talk about that final minute. Let's start with Deyton. Your drive to the hoop that tied the game, you were having -- all game long their length was giving you guys problems. You didn't seem to have much fear when you drove to the basket and attacked. Is that just kind of your mindset,**

**attack even when it was hard today to get those shots?**

DEYTON ALBURY: Yeah, I believe in myself and the coaches put a lot of confidence in me to drive downhill. They always preach that to me. I just made the layup.

**Q. They did call timeout. BJ then gets his bucket. I'm curious what you guys saw and if there's anything you wish maybe had happened differently to stay in front of them a little bit and prevent that from happening?**

DEYTON ALBURY: Yeah, it all happened kind of fast. The only adjustment I think I should have made was trying to send to his left hand. I think it probably would have made a difference. Probably force him into a tough midrange instead of on-the-backboard layup. Yeah, that's adjustment I would have made.

**Q. Luke, for you, kind of the same thing. They made it really difficult on you guys around the rim today. I'm curious just what you saw that was different from the first two regular season games in that regard where you guys had a little more success at the rim in the regular season, and they made it so hard today?**

LUKE HAUPT: I think part of that's post-season basketball. Physicality goes up. Every shot, every play is very important, so we missed a few at the rim. I think part of that was just us missing some, unfortunately.

Yeah, just didn't quite fall our way tonight.

**Q. Deyton, when you made the basket to tie the game, you may have answered this already, what was going through your head? Were you thinking, hey, it could be overtime or we're about to take this?**

DEYTON ALBURY: I knew the game wasn't over. I also knew what BJ was capable of just because what he's been doing all season. Didn't want to get too high in that moment. Just wanted to calm down and get a stop, but unfortunately, I didn't.

**Q. DA, you had nine turnovers in the first half.**

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**Cleaned them up in the second half; only had three. Was the strategy let's just attack the basket and see what happens?**

DEYTON ALBURY: Not really. I just felt like we weren't strong enough at the end of drives. San Diego is a really physical team, and at halftime in the locker room we just talked about it and tried to protect the ball a little bit more.

**Q. For both players, everything at the rim was contested. I'm wondering if you felt their game plan defensively against you was different than the first two games. They were going to put two bodies on Tom every time he touched it, and chase Jake and make it incredibly hard. Was it different than the first two games?**

DEYTON ALBURY: I didn't really feel no different. I think they were still crowding the paint. Only obvious difference I seen was the double on Tom, like you mentioned. But yeah.

LUKE HAUPT: Yeah, same thing. You said it. They stuck to Jake pretty time and doubled Tom every chance they got. That made it a little more difficult for those two guys, but those are kind of -- then they just played really physical.

**Q. For either player, you are 15 of 20 from the line. I think if you shoot your season average, you score five more points in a two-point loss. A lot of things can happen in a basketball game, but how much do you sort of kick yourselves not individually, but collectively when you see that stat?**

LUKE HAUPT: Yeah, I think obviously it hurts. You never want to miss a free-throw. You never want to miss that many free throws. Especially in a tight game. There are so many things that we could have done better throughout the entire game.

I think we're not sitting on one thing. We're disappointed about the result. We're disappointed for each other, this fan base, and it all kind of comes together as a big disappointment.

**Q. Both of you guys are seniors, and I'm curious if obviously the NCAA Tournament is probably not going to happen at this point, but the NIT is a real possibility. You guys both have the appetite to keep playing with this team right now?**

DEYTON ALBURY: Yeah, I mean, that's up to Coach. We will have those conversations when the time comes, but...

LUKE HAUPT: To echo what Deyton said, up to Coach, up to the whole team. I want to play as much as I can in front of this fan base for this university, so whatever that means, if it means this was it, if it means we play more, I'm game. So whatever.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the opportunity athletes at this time. Questions for Coach.

**Q. Eric, two things defensively I want to ask about is, first of all, how they made it so much harder at the rim this time, or maybe the results were just different, I don't know. But they did they do something different that made it harder at the rim this game?**

ERIC OLEN: I mean, they might have done a better job of, you know, making plays on the ball or being vertical. I didn't think it was like a huge scheme difference. I mean, that's what they do. They're hard to score against at the rim.

Obviously we would have liked to have finished a few a little better, but Luke talked about it. Level goes up in the postseason. Stakes go up. Whistles are a little less common. You got to adjust to that and find a way to get an angle or put in the basket on some of those.

I thought our guys did a good job of getting to where we want and a couple of them didn't go in for us.

**Q. Jake obviously 1 for 10, leading scorer, First-Team All-Conference. They were obviously targeting him, but he's been targeted a lot this season. What were they able to do to keep him from having his usual game and the success, and how did that affect maybe the rest of the offense when Jake is not getting the points?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, well, I mean, if Jake isn't scoring the way he normally does, I mean, he's such an efficient scorer, and he's able to really produce on pretty average volume. That didn't happen for us tonight, so that hurts us offensively any time that happens.

**Q. Coach, Tomislav Buljan and Jake Hall, they're your top two scorers. They do an amazing job. The Coach ended yesterday in the post presser that they were going to shut down Tom, they were going to shut down Hall. Did you have a game plan in mind or any players that you were, like, you guys need to step up, they're going to get shut down?**

ERIC OLEN: Not specifically. Obviously, I mean, teams have been having those two guys at the top of the scouting report for a while, so it's not new for teams to emphasize

those guys.

I think it's more about crediting San Diego State for having a really terrific defense. They're well-coached. They have talented players, you know, so some games are different than others.

I think it's more of a credit to their defense.

**Q. They sent the double on Tomislav Buljan tonight, and he's usually a good passer out of the double, but it seemed like he struggled a little bit more. What did you see from him?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, I thought especially in the first half they were able to -- they were able to make a lot of plays on the ball. The ball might be the wrong word there, but they made a lot of plays that caused us to lose control of the basketball.

I thought we were a little too willing to put it on the floor in traffic a little bit, and it took us a minute to adjust to that. That led to a lot of transition for them early.

We eventually got that corrected, but we did have too many turnovers in the first half that fueled their transition, and they're a team that you have to play complementary basketball. If you allow them in transition, if you turn the ball over against them, it gets very difficult.

**Q. They played the big-to-big lineup with Gwath and Heide out there in the first half. In the second half, what kind of challenges did that create for you guys?**

ERIC OLEN: I would have to look at the film to say specifically what happened on those possessions. You know, Gwath is a really skilled player, so he operates a lot of times as a perimeter player. You know, he's able to make some plays around the rim as well. He's a really talented guy.

When he's at the four with another big, it doesn't change what we're doing a whole lot defensively at least.

**Q. Do you remember what you may have been thinking when Deyton tied the game out. Late in the game like that, that could be a big momentum shift. It could bring you to take you home so to speak. Do you remember how fast that was and what were your thoughts?**

ERIC OLEN: That was a great play for him to get out in transition and be aggressive, understanding where we were in the game and kind of a broken floor, non-half court possession. So we always want him to be aggressive in

that situation. Great finish from him and a big spot to tie it. Unfortunately, couldn't follow it up with a stop.

**Q. As far as the free-throw line, how much of a factor do you think it played as far as affecting you guys, because I mean, like this guy just mentioned earlier, if you shot your average, you would have -- you would have been up at the end.**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, I think both teams probably would have liked to make a few more free-throws, but you know, that's college basketball. It happens that way.

I thought our guys did a really great job of just moving on to the next play. It didn't feel like it affected us. I thought we competed defensively. I thought we gave great effort. Even on the possessions that followed up, missed free-throws, that can be deflating, but I thought that it didn't affect our competitiveness.

It didn't affect our effort. I thought our guys did a pretty good job of moving on from that, because it can certainly be frustrating.

**Q. Coach, you came into the year with a whole new team, whole new coaching staff with yourself. How would you reflect on this entire season?**

ERIC OLEN: I'm not sure I could do that at this moment.

**Q. Eric, can you describe that feeling, last possession of San Diego State, shot clock is off, BJ Davis has the ball at the top. You just saw it in the first half from your bench. Is it kind of helpless? You kind of know what's going to happen, where he's going to try to go, but you can't call timeout, you can't really instruct your players. You just are a spectator at that point. What's that like as a coach?**

ERIC OLEN: I have a lot of confidence in our guys. I expected us to get a stop. I know BJ is a good player, and he's hit a bunch of clutch shots all season long. We saw it firsthand at Viejas.

Credit to him. I think DA is a good on-ball defender. When we got DA switched back on to him, I actually felt pretty good about potentially limiting the depth of his drive and it being more of a jump shot, but he was able to get pretty deep and make a good play.

**Q. ^ JR start the players both just said, yeah, we want to play. It's up to Coach. If you don't get the call to the NCAA Tournament on Sunday, thoughts on the NIT? Would you want to play in the NIT if you get the opportunity?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, we get back, we'll talk to our administration. RB and I will have conversations about what's the best thing for our program. I will just say that I love this group. These guys are giving us everything they have. If I get the chance to be part of more basketball with these guys, that's something that certainly interests me. But we'll talk about that when we get back.

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