

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Fresno State Bulldogs Coach Jaime White Imani Lacy Postgame Press Conference

Utah State 80, Fresno State 75

JAIME WHITE: Yeah, you know, I thought we were solid in the first half.

Second quarter didn't go great. We were glad to get to the locker room with a one-point lead and kind of reset some things.

I thought we did a good job coming out in the third quarter, and building a lead, going into the fourth, and then I mean, Utah State just kind of went on one. No. 23, that kid hit those threes. That was solid.

I thought they did a really good job being able to score under the pressure we had. And then just some things like that have hurt us all year, offensive rebounds, defensive stops. We're not keeping teams under even 70 points, and that's not ideal.

So but we had some good performances. Obviously Haley played solid; Imani had a good run; Hanna got 14 points.

One of the things that we've always looked for is four players in double digits. We didn't have that tonight, and I just thought they had some really big performances on their end.

Q. Imani, you guys were up 14, seven and a half left. Did you feel maybe comfortable at that point that you had the game?

IMANI LACY: No. I'm not comfortable till the buzzer hits zero. I felt we still needed to keep pushing as much as we could and they got a lead. It kind of tells us our defense could have been a lot better.

But I'm proud of our team. We did what we could and we



stayed together, and that's what I'm happy for.

Q. They started pressing a little more at that point. Do you think that bothered you guys?

IMANI LACY: I think it had a little bit of an impact because initially we weren't ready for it, but as we called a timeout and got situated and realized what we wanted to run it didn't bother us too much because we were able to break it pretty easily.

Q. How will you remember this season?

IMANI LACY: I just got a chip on my shoulder, and so does the rest of our team. We're not going out like that ever again.

JAIME WHITE: I could probably address some of those things, too. The pressure, we knew they had that press in their pocket, you know, and being able to bring the ball, get the ball over the timeline, I thought we did okay.

It's just probably that last three minutes we had like a scenario of unfortunate events which just turned into more unfortunate events. And I thought we could have shot our free throws a little bit better. I mean, Utah State, 22 for 22, and they just refused to lose.

Sometimes that's just how the game goes. I thought we shot well from the field and from the three point line, but 57 percent from the free throw line would have given us maybe a 24-point lead in the seven minutes to go.

Just kind of going to sting. Hopefully the girls let it set in their hearts and don't want that again, like Imani said. And obviously for coaches we want to get right back in the gym, but it's time to take a break and reevaluate and get started again for the next year.

Q. What has it been like just playing with this team in general and this group of girls and just trying to keep the focus, the shift as you guys see Utah State pulling back in the fourth quarter?

IMANI LACY: For me I guess I can say we're very young.



We're a young team. We have, myself included, and Amiee transferring in, trying to learn the system. We have a lot of -- like four freshmen still trying to learn the system, and we also have our veterans, but they're also still pretty young.

So it's just trying to gel and figure out what works for us. And as you can see, a lot of our games have been pretty close, so we're right there. We just have to take one more step to get to where we really want to be, and I think that's what we're going to be working on in the off season.

Q. Facing Utah State and going into over time against them you guys obviously knew a pretty good game plan coming into it. What did they do different that was just more difficult for you guys to handle today?

IMANI LACY: Honestly, I just feel like we just didn't apply our defense the way we needed to. They didn't really do anything different. They kind of stuck to their game plan as the last game, but our defense just wasn't there.

JAIME WHITE: And really just the fourth quarter. They only scored 13 in the second, 13 in the third; fourth quarter they scored 36.

Q. That's the question that I had. First quarter I thought we were headed for a 100-point ballgame, and then second quarter hit and four points. What do you think happened there?

JAIME WHITE: The eight points in the second quarter?

Q. Yeah.

JAIME WHITE: Yeah. Well, you know, again, we sometimes have a size difference, and I thought, you know, they have a little bit longer guards. I thought they did a good job getting hands on the ball, stopping our drives sometimes.

You know, I think they've consistently gotten better over the year, and the pressure they put on us didn't allow us to get open as well.

And then that same thing happened towards the end of the fourth quarter, too. We went cold and maybe rushed some offense a little bit, let their pressure bother us, and that's where we have to have a little more composure, a little more discipline, a little more urgency.

And we've struggled with that all year. All year, fourth quarter, you know, when we play a good fourth quarter, because we've always kept it close or had a lead, we play a good fourth quarter, we come out ahead.

But we've struggled with that. We've had games within five points consistently throughout the year. We've not really gotten beat and been done by that last five minutes. Usually it's a two-point game, it's a three point game. It's on the road. It's at home. It's everywhere.

So obviously we had some injuries early in the season. We've had a lot of different things. We had the pause with COVID. It's been a tough year.

At the same time, I am really proud of our kids for sticking together, working hard together, being good teammates, and it was a joy to come to work every day, even though maybe the wins in the win column wasn't as big.

Q. Coach, Haley is one of the more phenomenal players maybe we've ever seen on a women's college basketball court. The great thing about her is how she includes the team in everything she does on the court. What has it been like to coach her and see her on the court and how she's able to execute and lead the team?

JAIME WHITE: Yeah. Last year she wasn't necessarily our point guard, but that's a role that she was ready to take on this year. I think, you know, obviously she, especially on the offensive end, is very skilled and finds the basket. I mean, almost magical in finishing at the rim.

And, also, I think just worked really hard to be able to understand and know the plays and understand and know what we need during certain times of the game.

Q. Coach, to follow up on that, this was the first year, obviously with the NIL deals and everything else. For you guys to try to figure out more than anybody I guess probably in the country how to navigate a season like this, some of the attention, what has that been like and what have you learned maybe about that going forward?

JAIME WHITE: Yeah. Well, first off, I really think our university did a great job with Haley and Hanna, especially, because obviously they're the ones that have gotten a lot of notoriety from it.

But just really supporting them and helping them to understand the proper way to go about it. And then, also, I mean, bringing a lot of attention to our program and to our university and to our other players that are on the team.

And there's been so many positives to it. I can be extremely honest in that I've not seen that it's affected our team in any way. And I'm proud of them and what they've

done and how they've gone about it.

They've been very professional and they've been very -- they've thought about their teammates in a lot of ways, and you know, it's put a lot of pressure on them, and that, I think, is something as our student-athletes get more popular in that way -- and they should -- we as coaches and administration need to support them and help them kind of navigate through that.

Also, to play under the microscope of that many people is something you really have to deal with. So for them to perform day in and day out the way they do and to be able to play, I mean, especially with our injuries, both of them are playing a good 30-plus minutes a game. And good, bad, or ugly. Good, bad, or ugly.

So I'm proud of them, and I do 100 percent support them and 100 percent just, you know, really am grateful that I haven't seen it or it hasn't really affected our team in any way.

MODERATOR: We thank you, and we look forward to seeing you next year.

JAIME WHITE: See you next year, people.

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