

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 7, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Air Force Falcons

Chris Gobrecht

Cierra Winters

Riley Snyder

Postgame Press Conference



CIERRA WINTERS: I would just say the first two times we played them I don't think we got a fair shot so this really was like just, let's go show them what we're made of. And we knew we could come out like that and just executing that.

Q. And what kind of relief was there when you were executing it, when you were hitting those shots?

RILEY SNYDER: It feels good to see the first one go down and all of them go down. We're so hard to guard when every single person is hitting and we have such talented players on this team, you can't just guard one person because next man up is going to hit it.

Q. Without Haley most of the first half, how did that change things in terms of who needed to get rebounds and then just the importance of everybody crashing the boards?

RILEY SNYDER: Well Cierra got 10 over here and that helps a bunch. Yeah. No, she's a great rebounder. Our guards got to rebound too.

CIERRA WINTERS: Yeah. Coach was on us all week about they're a great rebounding team. Everyone has to box out. Like, even the guards crash, so we all knew it was important to get to the basket.

Q. This wasn't really your typical style in that you did shoot a high percentage and you didn't force a whole lot of turnovers. How do you think you, why was that -- first of all, why was Nevada so good at protecting against that and how do you think you overcame it?

CIERRA WINTERS: They play pressure defense too, so every day in practice they're guarded how we guard them. So they're used to that.

CHRIS GOBRECHT: That's exactly what I was going to say. It's true. They're used to the style and same, they force a lot of turnovers and we're used to facing that style. So it was tough to get either team to cough it up just because it's something we're really familiar with.

Air Force - 75, Nevada - 60

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

CHRIS GOBRECHT: Well, I thought that the hot start was extremely important because Nevada is an outstanding defensive team and they're also an outstanding rebounding team, and we had to hit shots. Being able to hit those shots early and Riley being on fire, Cierra getting to the rim, and Kamri Heath and Nikki McDonald, and we just had a lot of people that were hitting shots for us and that was enough to carry us, because like I said, I think Nevada's an outstanding rebounding team and it was really hard for us to get more than one shot.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. What was the key to that hot start, especially for you?

RILEY SNYDER: Yeah. I mean, my teammates got me the ball in great positions on the floor. We knew that whenever someone drove they collapsed really hard. So I mean we had kids on the boards. We had kids driving. So I mean, they give me the ball in an open spot my job's to knock it down.

And this is go-time. This is it for us, so whatever we had to do to get it done tonight.

Q. Because it's go-time, because it was so important, how were you able to be so cool out of the gate and translate that into something positive as opposed to the other way?



But I think that that's why the boards became so important, because we really count on those turnovers to compensate for the fact that we know we're not very big, the boards are always going to be tough, and I thought we really showed up on the boards in the second half. I thought we did a really good job in the second half.

Q. Obviously you had a record-setting year and now this is the first time any Air Force program has been to the semis. The men haven't done it either. How cool is that to add to what you've already done this year?

RILEY SNYDER: Coach was telling us this is just the cherry on top of a great season. And, I mean, like, we knew we were capable of this, so it's just going out there every time and giving it all we got and we do that every single night. We show up. We're tough. So, yeah, we want it bad this year.

CHRIS GOBRECHT: I don't think I've ever worried less about a team. They just, I just don't worry about whether or not they will know what needs to be done and be ready to do it.

And I'm pretty hands-off. I'm probably as hands-off as I've ever been because I just trust them so much and I trust their leadership so much.

Q. Does that double double mean anything or is it just on to the next game?

CIERRA WINTERS: Honestly, it's on to the next game. I didn't even know I had a double double. It's not about that. I was just doing my job. So we just want to win the next one and the one after that.

Q. Any thoughts on UNLV and that matchup for either of the two players?

RILEY SNYDER: I think both times we played UNLV we definitely did not play up to our potential. We got both of the matchups that we wanted. I don't think UNLV has seen Air Force basketball, so that's really encouraging for us. Yeah, I'm really excited. I wanted another chance at them.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. At this time you're dismissed and now we have questions for our head coach.

Q. In the third, say you were hands-off, but they haven't been here and you have. What did you do to instill some confidence when the lead was starting to dwindle?

CHRIS GOBRECHT: Well, we knew that there would be a

run. We didn't expect to go out and outscore them by 20 in the second half either. I think it was just, we just talked at the half. We talked, there was no celebrating or anything like that. We just had not done a good job on the boards at all.

So we talked a lot about the boards. We talked a lot about needing to play, some things that they had hurt us with, particularly No. 2 and some ways that she had been able to get us in foul trouble and we just covered the areas that we needed to clean up.

And then, I believe that one of the unsung heroes of this team is Jo Huntimer and for her to go out there and handle that pressure for almost, she played a lot. I don't know how many, but it was close to the whole game. She just handles it and she just carries on and she keeps everybody calm and I think has a lot to do with them being able to just say, okay, we're good, we're fine.

We know we can play good defense. They hit some shots. We didn't expect them to keep missing and they did hit some shots there in that second half. But I think because of just the sort of the calm that Jo brings when she gets, brings that ball up the floor and starts to get us into our offense, everybody always feels pretty good.

I mean, sure, there's a lot of countdowns going on sometimes. You know, eight, seven, six, five, four, but that's a lot of that have is because, and so we're very dependent on one another to get scores.

But I thought we also, as the shot clock was winding down several times, showed a lot of poise from different players at different times. So they have just, they just don't like, you know, I told you before, they just don't get rattled. They just sort of carry on.

Q. Is UNLV the only team you haven't beaten yet or am I remembering that incorrectly? At Air Force.

CHRIS GOBRECHT: No, you're correct. That's the only team that -- me personally, yes, that I have not beaten yet.

Q. Kind of fitting then that that's the next one you got to knock off to play on?

CHRIS GOBRECHT: You got to hope that sooner or later the odds will be with you (laughing).

So, third time was a charm with Nevada and hopefully it will be the same with UNLV. But they are a handful for us. They're big, strong. They execute great. They have shooters. They have post play. It's pretty hard to find a weakness. There's a reason they won the conference. It's

pretty hard to find a weakness there.

So I just think we are going to have to play well. And like Riley said, we didn't, we just haven't played well against them, but they probably have had something to do with that. So hopefully we can show up tomorrow and play well.

Q. 21 points off the bench. Just how impactful was the bench in this game?

CHRIS GOBRECHT: Our bench has been really important for us all year. We have, we play a style of play that it takes a lot out of you. We pick up full court. We push the ball in transition. A huge part of our strategy is always you might hang with us for awhile, but sooner or later the White flag's going up.

So we chase people down, chase people down, chase people down until it starts to affect 'em. And we have to have a bench to do that. And one of the differences from past years and this year is that our bench play is strong. We can go to the bench. We can get players that not only can hold the fort down, but sometimes can give us an extra kick or an extra push.

And so they have been very important, whether it was Lauren McDonald or Nikki McDonald or, we just recently have had Briana Autrey-Thompson back and Kayla Pilson back, and those are two good players who it's very nice to be able to say, hey, can you get in there and guard 2, you know, help us out here.

And I'm happy they're able to contribute because they've missed so much of the season. But I'm very, very, very pleased with our bench play and it's a huge part of why we are where we are.

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