

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Utah State Aggies

Coach Kayla Ard

Ashya Klopfenstein

Postgame Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Joining Kayla Ard will be senior Ashya Klopfenstein. We'll go ahead and have an opening remark from coach.

KAYLA ARD: I want to thank the Mountain West for putting on this tournament, first of all. It's a great tournament. We're happy to be a part of it, and we're grateful to be here.

We are really, really proud of our girls today for their buy-in to the game plan, for their fight. It's not a win. I wish we could have won. Obviously, we wanted to win, but I couldn't be more proud of their effort that they put out there today.

They did everything I asked them to do. Our three was not falling, unfortunately, but they gave me everything they had. I asked them to leave everything out there and they did that, so I'm very proud of that.

Like I said, I wish it would have resulted in a win, but very, very proud of their effort and buy-in today.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and take questions for the student athlete.

Q. Ashya, you really did a nice job disrupting the passing lanes in the first half. Had a couple of steals. Just what was your mentality on defense there? You just kept attacking.

ASHYA KLOPFENSTEIN: I got nothing to lose. I got nothing to lose. My last game, a senior, I'm going to give it everything I have, and hard work and work ethic is what I base my game off of.

So just going to give it everything I've got.

Q. There was that tough stretch in the second half, but you start taking over, you start scoring for the Aggies and get them going again. Is it the same kind of mentality there, or what was going through your head?

ASHYA KLOPFENSTEIN: Yeah, I can't do what I do if my teammates don't do what they do. If I don't get the ball from them, I can't do what I do.

It was just team basketball. Everybody had a turn. We had, like, four of us in double digits tonight, so it wasn't just me. It was a whole team effort, and I'm just happy to be here.

Q. What did it mean to you to be able to play this last game of your career?

ASHYA KLOPFENSTEIN: Not even this last game, just this last season has been so, so sweet. Like, I respect Coach Ard. I have so much respect for her. I love her. I appreciate everything that she's done for me.

To play for this coaching staff, to play with this team, the seniors, all of us, we're new here, it was just so sweet, and I wouldn't have changed anything about it. I've learned a lot.

Q. So what's next now that your basketball career is over?

ASHYA KLOPFENSTEIN: Isn't that the million dollar question (laughing)? I don't know. Wherever God takes me. I'm big on faith, so wherever he has me, I'm happy to go.

KAYLA ARD: I think he has you in Logan.

ASHYA KLOPFENSTEIN: Still praying about it. I don't know. It's a good life. Every day is just a blessing, and whatever he has for me, I'm going to do the best I can at it. That's all.

Q. Then one more question. What do you think is the biggest takeaway from your experience here at Utah State?



ASHYA KLOPFENSTEIN: That's a good question. I just realize how precious life is. Like there are so many people who don't get to do what I get to do every day, and how blessed am I to be a college athlete, to play basketball for a living?

Every day is a blessing, and I just want to live it to the best of my ability. And just relationships. Like, I have these relationships for life, and they've done more for me than I can put into words that you guys will ever understand. So just super happy.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll go ahead and continue with Coach.

Q. Coach, just looking overall, I know this is something coaches like to do is point-wise, you won the second quarter and you won the fourth quarter. Was there a fresh slate mentality that you would take after each stoppage?

KAYLA ARD: Quite frankly, it was a fresh slate mentality that we took into the game. We've obviously had a rough season this year. I told the girls after the game, it's a lot harder to do what they did after such a rough season and still believe, still have faith, to still go into the game and have confidence, buy into the game plan, trust their coaching staff.

It's a lot harder to do that than it is to have a good season, and obviously you have all those things.

So, yes, it was. We were trying to kind of have a fresh slate after every timeout, after every media. Hey, it's 0-0. Let's go out there and give it everything we have.

So I don't want to say we weren't looking at the scoreboard. I would like to say that. I was telling them not to look at the scoreboard. I was looking at the scoreboard, but, you know, they just -- again, they just left everything they had out there. We kept getting close, kept getting close, and then we would get a wide-open three and couldn't make it, unfortunately.

So, yes, to the game, fresh slate. And, yes, every timeout, every timeout we're, hey, it's 0-0. Let's play this next four minutes or five minutes.

Q. One of your best balanced performance. What did you see from your team on offense tonight?

KAYLA ARD: There was just a lot of buy-in tonight. We definitely went into the game plan trying to attack their post players, which I know that probably sounds a little bit

ludicrous because they're a lot bigger than us, but we have post players that can attack off the bounce.

So we were trying to take what we had that would have been harder for them to guard. We were doing a lot of picking and popping. As they went under the screen we would pop, which we got what we wanted, we got 23 threes off, but we only made three of them, unfortunately.

So had that gone a little better for us, maybe we could have pulled out the win.

I just thought the kids were extremely locked into the game plan offensively and defensively. We had to make some adjustments as they started going at us with their post inside. We had to make some adjustments there, which the kids did a good job with midgame.

But they were just bought in. They were hungry. They were bought in. When one player couldn't get going, they went to another one. They trusted each other. We moved the ball around. I think that's how we resulted in having four people in double figures.

Q. You had some really tough games on the road there towards the end, especially at Boise State. It can be a demoralizing loss to lose by that much, but you guys reset and you played them really close here in the tournament. What does that say about your team's ability it on turn around there?

KAYLA ARD: That's what I mean. I think that's so much harder to do than having a good season and then coming into the tournament and continuing a good season.

You would think these kids would lay down or not have any confidence, not believe in themselves anymore, and they didn't. They just washed it all away. We asked them to leave everything they had out there, and they did that today. They weren't thinking about the last couple of games.

We had some really rough games where it just looked like we weren't there. We weren't playing team basketball, and they just hit the reset button. They wanted to give it all they had today. We wanted to send our seniors off on a good note.

Although this is not a win, we did do that. We did send them off -- all those kids were laughing in the locker room. They're all smiling. They had fun today, and that was our goal. When I said, I want to come down here, I want them to have some fun down here, that is what I meant. I wanted them to come down here and enjoy playing basketball, and we did that today.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much for your time.

KAYLA ARD: Thank you, guys. Have a good day.

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