

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

UNLV Lady Rebels

Coach Lindy La Rocque

Desi-Rae Young

Essence Booker

Postgame Press Conference



hit adversity, but when we do hit adversity it comes down to Desi, me, Justice, just the upperclassmen just sticking together and showing poise so that we could bring along the team.

Q. Going off of that, just what did you see from Justice in that third quarter to kind of build you guys that buffer there?

ESSENCE BOOKER: I mean, Justice was carrying. I mean, I shot 4 for 15. We couldn't get nothing going and Justice was carrying. That's what she does. She's a silent assassin, so we depend on her to do that, and she came up and showed up today.

Q. Essence, you were 2 of 13 from the field, and then you made your final two shots in the last two minutes and you made all your free-throws. How were you able to forget about maybe the first 38 minutes and then just really focus in like that down the stretch?

ESSENCE BOOKER: It was really my teammates the whole game and the coaching staff. Desi came up to me a few times and told me just to make the free-throws, and Lindy is always pushing for me to be aggressive the entire game.

Whether I miss a shot or not I know Desi is going to grab the rebound and Alyssa Brown is going to grab the rebound. Just staying aggressive the entire game, the entire 40 minutes and not letting my foot off the gas.

Q. Desi, talk about the energy shift you felt in the third quarter and just how you guys came out swinging in the second half.

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, Coach Lindy talked about it, just being aggressive. I think we gave up too many points in the paint. You know, that's what we like to do, so we had to take that away from them, and I think we did an incredible job doing that.

Q. This is for either, anybody. You guys ended the first half with eight turnovers, and you ended the game with 11. So what was that adjustment like, and how

UNLV 71, San Diego State 68

THE MODERATOR: For the Lady Rebels joining Coach Lindy La Rocque will be Desi-Rae Young and Essence Booker. We'll have an opening remark in the coach.

LINDY LA ROCQUE: First off, man, what a great game. San Diego State, we knew it was going to be like that. A battle for 40 minutes. I'm shocked it didn't go to more minutes because we kind of expected that going in.

But just really credit their coaching staff, all the talent that they have on their team. You know, I really admire what they do, the season that they've had. Unfortunately, obviously, someone had to lose the game, but, you know, really respect them in the other locker room.

I know they're disappointed, but really proud of our group. These two next to me, the toughness that they showed for every minute that they played is why we won the game. Desi is just clutch. We know that. Similar with Essence. Obviously, the free-throws down the stretch, you know, she misses one or two of those, and then it can get really scary, so proud of our group from top to bottom to just really battle.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Essence, Coach has said at several points throughout the season that the veteran leadership on this team in terms of you, Desi, and Justice as well, you guys are going to lead this group when it matters most. How did that manifest itself today?

ESSENCE BOOKER: I mean, we got in some tough situations that we put ourselves in during the game and we



important is it to keep those turnovers under control?

ESSENCE BOOKER: I mean, obviously, things are going to happen within the game, but it's just about making adjustments. I feel like in the second half it was a tied game, so we were just trying to come out and throw the first punch and keep our foot on the gas whether or not we had turnovers in that first half.

We forgot about the first half. We wanted the score to be 0-0 when we came out in that second half.

Q. Lindy, it seems like San Diego State just wouldn't go away with all the threes at the end and the tie-ups. Is this the sort of game that you know you're going to run into at some point in March, and what does it take to win these kind of games?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Sure. That's March basketball, right? I mean, you can throw up something from half court. A kid that's never made a shot, and you expect it to go in this month. You know, I'm not surprised.

Again, like, I know how talented they are over there and I knew they were kind of, like, keep swinging. They weren't just going to roll over and not play hard. You know, even there late I knew -- they've got a great coaching staff over there. They're going to draw up something, and they had some shots go in from very capable players.

Obviously defensively we were focused on not fouling. Maybe a little too passive, but, you know, that's March basketball.

Q. Coach, obviously, the goal is to win the game tomorrow, but with that said, do you feel like you have to win tomorrow to get into the NCAA tournament? What are your thoughts on that?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: I think we're focused on winning because we want to win. That's why we play. We want to win.

We want to control our own destiny, and that's what we're excited to do.

Q. Coach, it seemed like they were cutting off your dives for the basket. What adjustment did you see to make the changes in the second half, because it seemed like they came a little easier in the third quarter to dive to the basket?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: You know, again, they're the best defensive team in the league, and so they make adjustments, and it's about our players continuing to just

make plays.

Sometimes it's not always about the play that I call and more of them being basketball players out there and making plays. I think a lot of times that's what ended up happening. It was something broken and Essence makes a play, Justice makes a play, and a pass to the passer.

I thought our rebounding was huge to be able to finish some of those things.

Q. Desi, I know it's not about you, but how satisfying is it for you to have this kind of game today after having the game you had yesterday with another double-double for you?

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, like I told you yesterday, there's no "I" in team. I take pride in team basketball. I do whatever the team needs me to do. I believe in that. I'm going to play like that all the time.

I think everyone put in today. I mean, even people who didn't play. Erica gives us great energy. Essence came in and did so much things. Justice did amazing things. Little Key, I mean, we all do little things that play into my game as well, so I just think my team is on my back all the time, and I have their back all the time.

Q. Desi, just what's made San Diego State such a difficult matchup for you guys? Obviously, you played them really close twice in the regular season.

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, I think they're just as good as us. They're second. We're first. They're right under us. I think they play basketball very, very well. I think Yummy is a great player. She's, like, the best matchup I played all my Mountain West career.

I think Asia is a great player as well. We give her the work. We give everybody the work, and they give it back to us as well. We want everybody's best game, so we have to give them our best game too.

Q. Lindy "fortunate" is the word I'm going to use, but the team went scoreless for I think three minutes in that second quarter. San Diego State was only able to go up by four. Do you think the group was fortunate to not find themselves down more?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Our team was fortunate? No.

Q. No, I'm asking you.

LINDY LA ROCQUE: No, I don't think we were fortunate. I think we were playing hard. They were playing hard. I

thought we just didn't have a couple of things go our way. I mean, that's just a little bit of the basketball part of it. It's a game of runs. I mean, you expect that. I don't know.

Maybe I'll have to go back and watch the film to really see what you are talking about, but I don't feel like we were lucky (laughing).

Q. Then this last one from me. Obviously, the team's record is what it is, but whenever Justice scores in double figures this group is 13-0. Kind of what is it about her in a big moment?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: She just rises to the occasion. You know, she really does. These two, you know, are on everyone's scouting report, and they're the priority of what people try to take away, so when you have a third player like Justice who can go off, who can attack the basket, she's so athletic. She only shot one three, but she can put it up from three.

I think that's what really makes us hard to guard. That's when we're really clicking. You know, she's a senior. She's a Las Vegas native. She don't want to lose either.

Q. You talked about March basketball, and often to win these games your best players have to play their best. All three are Vegas kids. Can you talk about that? I know you already said it in your opening statement, about how important it is that these were the three that kind of led you.

LINDY LA ROCQUE: I think it's pretty dang cool. I think if we've got a special team, we've got a special story.

But it's not just about them. I think, you know, they infuse the pride of Las Vegas throughout the rest of our team, even the ones that aren't from here. I'm really proud of them. They carry that responsibility throughout town, and, you know, again, Las Vegas has showed the love back to us. We want to keep playing for them and for us.

Q. You guys got into a really close one at the very end. You got within one point. What was the thought process? What went on during the team huddle during the timeout when you were within one after the two three-pointers by San Diego State?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Is that for me or for them?

Q. For you.

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Just come out and execute. We weren't worried. We practiced that. They looked at me and they were, like, what are we doing? I was like, we're

doing this, and they went out and did it.

We practice those things. I trust them. They trust me. They have -- we have people that -- it's not anything that we haven't practiced, I guess, so we weren't worried. We don't panic. We stay calm and composed and just go out there and make the play.

Q. A follow-up on that. Desi and Essence, what was your mindset going into the final possession there in the fourth quarter?

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I would say just be aggressive. You know, they're a great team and they're going to come out with everything they've got. Even with those last two threes, we still weren't worried.

We were more worried about winning the game, having Essence make those last two free-throws. That's what we were worried about.

ESSENCE BOOKER: I was more so -- I mean, they made some big shots. Those two threes back-to-back, I was just trying not to look stressed (laughing), but I just knew I had to hold it together for my team, walk to the line with confidence, make the free-throws, and keep it together for the team. Stay poised.

Q. You guys had a great shooting night yesterday, and today not so much, but you guys still found a way to get it done. What do you think your guys' identity is of the team? Anyone.

LINDY LA ROCQUE: You know that question, Jade. You know the answer (laughing). We score inside. We score inside. We go inside to Desi. She's our rock. She's our anchor. We score in the paint. That's our identity. We rebound, and then we execute.

On nights that we can make shots, I this it's bonus. You know, again, San Diego State, being the defensive team, I knew we weren't going to get a ton of threes. I thought we got a couple more than I expected to. The two that we hit were huge, but, you know, that's when they force you to do. So, you know, yeah.

Q. You heard your coach talk about you guys being from here, carrying kind of the banner for Vegas. Can you talk a little bit about that and how cool that is that you are the three that kind of can do this in this big of game?

ESSENCE BOOKER: I mean, it's super awesome. I feel like Desi, Justice, and I, we all take pride in that. Especially Lindy. Just putting our mark on Las Vegas and

us trying to carry the momentum for people coming behind us, you know, freshmen coming in and just kind of exposing that Vegas does have talent. It's underrated. So, I mean, we definitely all take pride in that.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so much.

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