

# Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 11, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

## Wyoming Cowgirls

### Coach Heather Ezell

### Malene Pedersen

### Allyson Fertig

#### Postgame Press Conference

Boise State 62, Wyoming 54

THE MODERATOR: For Wyoming we have student-athletes Malene Pedersen, Allyson Fertig, Coach Heather Ezell. Coach, comments on tonight's game.

HEATHER EZELL: Credit to Boise. What a game they played. I thought they really came out and executed. But at the same time, credit to my team. They came out and they battled. It's been, what we talked about, our bugaboo all year is we have to be able to make shots in the fourth quarter.

But credit to Boise because they played a heck of a game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Allyson, you guys obviously had the lead with five minutes left and just went cold and they went on a 14-0 run. Why do you think you guys weren't able to close some of these games down the stretch, especially tonight?**

ALLYSON FERTIG: It wasn't just today. It's been the couple of last games, but like Coach was just saying, we can make those shots in the first, second, third quarter. For some reason we just can't knock them down in the fourth quarter.

And I think that's just going to be a big emphasis for us to being able to knock those shots down when we are pressured and when it means the most.

**Q. Malene, how do you feel about the season? Obviously you guys were in good position a couple of weeks ago and then kind of had that little lull, that**



**losing streak. I know you wanted to regroup here, but just couldn't quite finish this one.**

MALENE PEDERSEN: I mean, I think we were excited, and we were definitely ready for this tournament. Unfortunately, our shots, as they have talked about, didn't fall in the fourth quarter.

But I feel like we have improved and learned from those games when we had a stretch where we had a couple of losses.

Yeah, it's just got to be something that we need to improve on and stick together.

**Q. Obviously you'll both be back next year. Allyson, you almost had a triple-double tonight. How do you kind of see building off this year? I know it's a disappointment and what you can work on personally.**

ALLYSON FERTIG: I think just, I don't know, I really -- our team was great this year, and I think we just can only get better. So I'm excited for next year because we had some freshmen step up this past season, and I'm excited to see what they're going to do next year having a year under their belt and just growing closer as a team.

Yeah, in the end it's always just like you can make one more shot, one more this, one more this, but in the end it's a team thing. And so I think growing as a team is the most important thing we can do, so...

**Q. Malene, any thoughts on next year? I know you expected to be playing for the next few weeks, but how can you build on this with almost everyone coming back?**

MALENE PEDERSEN: I'm excited. It's nice that we have a lot of returners coming back, and it really helps us improve and getting even better because we know each other. We have played with each other for the whole season here, and we can just only build from there. I'm excited for next season.

**Q. Allyson, does a loss like this -- I know we**



**mentioned this last year with the UNLV championship game, but does a loss like this kind of help propel just some motivation going into next year?**

ALLYSON FERTIG: I think every loss and especially a big loss like this in the tournament just gives us motivation to work harder to know -- like, we've been talking about reaching the boiling point. I think we were just there, and we just didn't get to that boiling point that we needed to for this game.

But just knowing and having that chip on our shoulder and knowing we can get better, we're not the best we can be right now. Just getting better every single day and not having those lulls where we digress but keep improving every single day.

**Q. Malene, how tough of a matchup is Mya Hansen, and I guess what did you see out of her tonight?**

MALENE PEDERSEN: I mean, she's a very diverse player. She can pull the three, and she can drive well. Yeah, she had a really good game, so credit to her. We had a hard time guarding her.

I mean, we also -- I think we are a good defensive team. So I know that we can guard her, and we can guard whoever to guard in this league. But we have to really emphasize it. We need to be focused on what our task is.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let the student-athletes go at this time. Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach.

**Q. Heather, what do you think was missing in some of these big games down the stretch that maybe you had early during conference play?**

HEATHER EZELL: I think the big thing -- I've got to take the heat of it as being able to finish games. There's something that hasn't been clicking for us, and as a head coach, I have to take that responsibility, and we have to do some things in practice maybe a little bit different that we can start finishing games better.

It's exactly what Allyson said. We give all the effort in the first, second, and third quarter, and then we seem to hit something in the fourth quarter where either the pressure gets a little too tight or whatnot. And that's on me. I have to get them ready to finish all 40 minutes.

**Q. I know it will pay off in the future, but is it kind of tough? There were a couple of stretches in this game where you rested the starters and then they would make like a 7-0 run and pull back even.**

HEATHER EZELL: Yeah, we always have got to try and -- we have no one on our team that can play 40 minutes the way we play defense. We have to be locked in and engaged.

We have to give rest at certain times, but at the same time we have to continue to build our bench so that we don't have those drop-offs. Once again, I'll take full responsibility in that of not having them ready through practice and everything like that to be able to come in and not have that drop-off.

**Q. Are you encouraged, 30 games in with the schedule you played, that Allyson is about getting a triple-double and overall the team is pretty healthy? And how can you build on that with most of the girls coming back?**

HEATHER EZELL: Yeah, when we look at it, we have a great core. There's no doubt about it. We're going to miss Marta. There's no doubt about that. She is the epitome of Cowgirl toughness and what we talk about all the time and owning a role and understanding a role and coming in every day and working.

It's tough to see a kid like that that's put so much work in to see her career end, but at the same time the future is very bright. We just have to -- kind of like Allyson said, we have to have that chip on our shoulder.

We have to take that into the offseason and really improve on some areas that we've got to just, once again, dig down and being able to get some stuff done when the coaches aren't in the gym and when the coaches aren't around this summer of going I'm still going to put in that work because I don't want to be in this position next year.

**Q. You didn't mention Ola. Do you know if she's made a decision yet?**

HEATHER EZELL: Ola announced on Senior Night she'll be returning. She'll be back next year.

**Q. What do you think the key to this offseason is when you're not there? What do you want them doing when you're not looking?**

HEATHER EZELL: It's exactly that, the extra degree. We talk about it all the time. At 211 degrees water doesn't boil, but at 212 it boils. We need that extra degree.

We have to be able to put in that work that puts you over the top and when it's uncomfortable, when it starts to hurt, when things aren't going your way. You can't just do it on the good days. You have to do it on the bad days as well.

**Q. We talk about Allyson's offense a lot, but with seven blocks defensively through 35 minutes or so, I mean, how far has she come just on the defensive end?**

HEATHER EZELL: Leaps and bounds. She takes a lot of pride in the defensive end, and now it's becoming one of the things that she's going to go, you know what, no, I'm going to stop my matchup.

We talk about it. It's team defense, but everybody has their one-on-one matchup at certain times where it's going we can't bring help, you have to be able to take care of it. A lot of that does fall on Al's shoulders, Marta's shoulders.

Credit to her, she's really stepped up on that defensive end. I think the last five games of the season she played with that chip on her shoulder. Now we have to get her to play for that for 30 games of, Hey, I'm going to post up every time because there's not too many people that can stop her when she wants to get what she wants.

**Q. I guess what are some of your biggest take-aways from the season just as a whole?**

HEATHER EZELL: I mean, I think we saw a lot of growth. Being able to play the freshmen that we were able to, get those experience, I think that's huge. At the same time just being able to learn from the games that we did have that we didn't come out on top.

I thought we still learned every day, got better every day. And what it really comes down to, and like I said, I have to look myself in the mirror and see what we can do better in practice and prep, but we have to finish. That's what it's going to come down to. We're playing 35-minute games. We have to play 40-minute games.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports