

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

San Diego State Aztecs

Coach Stacie Terry-Hutson

Naomi Panganiban

Cali Clark

Kim Villalobos

Veronica Sheffey

Postgame Press Conference

San Diego State 72, Wyoming 68 (OT)

THE MODERATOR: For San Diego State we have student-athletes Cali Clark, Veronica Sheffey, Kim Villalobos, Naomi Panganiban, and Coach Stacie Terry Hutson. Coach, let's start with you.

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: What a great game for women's basketball. What a great game for the Mountain West against a really good opponent. I just want to shout out Wyoming, because people kind of sleep on the Mountain West. We have a great league with a lot of great coaches, and that was really, really fun to be a part of.

Proud of our girls. Battled. You know, we had a taste of this March 13th, 2024. I reminded them, this is where we were last year, but on the other side of it. So we were really hungry, and I thought that they were not going to be denied tonight.

Defensively we just did a great job getting stops when we needed to. Just really proud of us. Looking forward to playing some more basketball with this group.

Q. Cali, your first start this tournament. If you haven't seen already, let me read your stats. 12 points, 17 rebounds, five offensive, six steals, three blocks on Allyson Fertig no less. You're the only D1 player this century with those numbers in a conference tournament game.

KIM VILLALOBOS: Wow.



Q. Where did that come from?

CALI CLARK: To be honest, when I play a basketball game, I don't try and look at that. I'm always for the team and what the team needs, and tonight the team needed me to play some defense and not let Allyson do what she normally does, because obviously she's the player of the year.

We knew she was going to be a really great opponent, so just knowing that was my role, I just locked in on that and kind of played with what the game gave me.

Q. What was your reaction when Coach tells you you're going to start?

CALI CLARK: I kind of obviously, like I said, knew if she needed me to start on Allyson, then that's what I got to do.

It is, I guess, what we needed obviously, and to let a non-starter come in and be a starter, because that's what we needed to do, I think that was big for us. I did what I got to do.

Q. Veronica, big, huge buckets basically at the end of every fourth quarter, overtime, some free-throws, buckets, whatever it took. Take me through it all; 24 points?

VERONICA SHEFFEY: I just knew we were going to win the game. That was the mindset the whole time. Like everyone was locked in. I don't think anyone had any doubt that we weren't going to go home.

So just knowing that, staying locked in, just really focusing, knowing we need those free-throws to get the score up like a farther gap a little bit. I think just staying focused and staying focused on the main goal that we all had, so...

Q. Naomi, we talked yesterday about yesterday being your biggest game. Obviously this one, bigger as a freshman. I think 15 points on the night. Just what kept you grounded? What kept you calm with the ball



in your hand in the biggest moments?

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: Honestly we just wanted to win so bad. Ever since this summer, we can see -- I mean, I saw it personally, like it was going to be different. We wanted it so bad.

I'm grateful for my coaches and my teammates for believing in me and trusting in me for having the ball even in these big games.

Just a testament to us and all our hard work, so I'm really happy.

Q. Kim, kind of a quiet night until overtime. You get five in the first overtime period. Just how do you do it? Just how do you --

KIM VILLALOBOS: Honestly, I love those moments and all the fans. Whether it's Wyoming fans or our fans, I just love playing in front of a crowd. I love the energy it brings to the team, and I feel like it's just competing at the end of the day.

I think we really wanted to win, you know, and I don't know. It just kind of happened organically. I didn't want to force anything. Yeah, ball went in at the end.

Q. One of them was that fall-away that you do in front of the basket. That one in my mind hasn't really been falling for you. How did that feel?

KIM VILLALOBOS: Yeah. Like you said, it wasn't really falling for me this tournament, but I think, you know, you look at the stat sheet, my teammates can definitely do the rest, so yeah.

Q. Kim, you were here last year for that one. Just what does it mean to you to get the job done this time?

KIM VILLALOBOS: It means so much. I can get emotional talking about it, but really I'm, like, emotional but also so happy and can't stop smiling about it.

That's why I stayed because I knew there's no ceiling on this program, and I knew what Stacie and the staff could do and the new additions and my teammates. I knew exactly what we were capable of.

Yeah, we came into this with confidence, and we executed that. So I'm just so happy I stayed.

Q. For any of you guys, you build leads in these overtime periods just to lose them. How do you stay grounded and focused to finish it out?

VERONICA SHEFFEY: I think just staying together. How many times we had a chance to huddle up and talk about what we were going to focus on, but I think we all just really stayed together and just staying focused. It was as simple as that, so...

Q. Cali, what are the emotions you're feeling right now?

CALI CLARK: I couldn't even tell you, to be honest. I think it's still kind of unreal. Obviously we're really excited. We have a lot of veterans on this team. You know, me and Kim are fifth years, and we've been working a long time for this. To start Naomi's career -- it's too many emotions. We're all really excited.

We're excited to see what this postseason looks like. Obviously I'm not going to move on too quick from this. We're going to celebrate it for sure. But no, it's unreal.

Q. What made you want to come play for the Aztecs?

CALI CLARK: Actually a year ago today I watched the same press conference. I saw the girls talk about how the coaching staff really made them fall in love with basketball.

I knew that when I was done at Colorado State, I wanted to take my fifth year at another school and kind of separate myself from Colorado. I'm from Colorado and kind of wanted to go be a grown-up.

I knew Kellie. She coached me there. We always had a good relationship and I trusted her. I saw how much the girls trusted these coaches. Obviously I was familiar with the Mountain West, so there was no doubt in my decision to come here.

The faith that the coaching staff had in me, I'm just going to be forever grateful for. We wouldn't be here in this moment if they didn't trust me and see my potential.

Q. Naomi, you're a freshman, and the team draws up the last shot of the first two overtime periods to go to you. What did that mean and what you've been able to accomplish as part of the team this year?

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: It meant a lot. Just like I said before, just the fact that they trust me, it just builds my confidence to be able to take those last shots. I really wanted to make it, but I didn't. (Laughing).

Q. Well, you're also a hometown gal playing at SDSU. You speak about having so many friends and family in the area. Just what does it mean to bring the first



conference tournament championship back to The Mesa for the first time since 2012?

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: It means a lot. I grew up watching the games at Viejas, so just to see it come to life, like it was one of my dreams just to be able to give back to my city and my family, play in front of my family. Yeah, it meant a lot.

Q. Cali, you and the post players going against one of the toughest groups of players in the Mountain West in this championship game, just speak to the attitude that everybody down on the blocks had coming into this game and how you were able to win the battle in the paint and ultimately win the game?

CALI CLARK: I think we focused on the toughness it would take. Just the constant -- obviously they're going to get some; we're going to get some. The constant back and forth and just being able to pick ourselves up.

We all trust each other. I trust her when she needs to guard someone. She trusts me. I think it's just that trust and focus and what we need to do and executing it.

Q. You've made so many big shots for San Diego State this season. Just speak to where you developed that iron will to come through in the biggest moments?

VERONICA SHEFFEY: It just comes from being competitive. I just have a competitive spirit, and I know we all do. That's all our mindsets.

The coaching staff really does a good job of over the whole season just developing us and preparing us for those moments and making the right reads. We can drill the scouting team as much as we want, but when it comes down to the end of the clock, you have to make the right read. All the coaches do a really good job of just preparing us for that.

The credit really goes to them and then all of us sticking together and focusing to finish it off.

Q. Kim, no woman has worn the scarlet and black more than you have, and you're going to get to wear it in the NCAA Tournament. Just what sort of moments come to your mind when you think about your time at SDSU that have led you up to this moment?

KIM VILLALOBOS: I mean, there's so many moments and I think memories that I have made at SDSU with the coaching staff, with every single person I've interacted with at State I think has left an impact on me.

It's a huge reason why I stayed. I love it. I've trusted the coaching staff. John, we've been together forever, Stacie. I guess so many moments. I can't even think about it right now because we just won. But yeah, it's just been really fun.

I'm so glad I'm leaving, and I know we have more to play, but with a championship.

Q. Naomi, you seem to like playing the role of an underdog. Post-game of the Fresno State game you mentioned the fact that there was 91% odds of Fresno State beating San Diego State. Do you feel like you had that same energy tonight?

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: Yeah, of course. I just feel like people always count us out even from the beginning, nonconference, conference, everything.

I think that just fueled the team, especially myself and everyone else to prove them wrong and prove us right. I think we worked so hard for it and I think we deserve it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes. Questions for the coach.

Q. Coach, three overtimes. What's your heart rate like in those moments? What are you focusing on?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Still, you can see I'm shaking a little bit. It wasn't the best offensive game for us. I thought it was a little shaky. Trying to get something going, there wasn't a lot of flow.

I was really proud of our defense. Cali anchoring us in the low post. We had to go with the bigger line-up because they are so big, so Jazlen Green came in and helped guard a little bit; Naomi, Kim, Nat. I just thought we did a really good job defending in the post.

We had a great game plan. Shout-out to my staff. We spent most of the day trying to figure out what we were going to do, and we knew that we couldn't guard Fertig by ourselves. We talked a lot about post defense starting from the top of the key making it hard to pass it in to her. You can't stop a player as good as she is, but we just tried to slow her down.

Defensively we just got stops when we needed to, and that's really -- that's been our motto all year. We really tried to focus on improving on the defensive end from the summer and being ranked in most of the categories this year, and I think that's why we've been able to win as many as we have.



25 wins is nothing to shake a stick at, and we're going for some more.

Q. Cali, with a start like you said, what went into that decision? What did you like about that matchup specifically? Ultimately, how right of a decision was that?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: I want to talk about Adryana Quezada when you say that, because she's been my starter. She's a lot of our go-to on offense. She and I had a conversation, and she and I decided that that was going to be the best move for the team.

So she graciously gave that up because she knew that was what was going to be best for the team. That's a testament to the kids that we have in this program. It's we over me, and she was willing to give that up for us to get the win.

I want to shout-out her because that was a conversation that we had, and again, that just shows who we are.

Q. What was kind of the main difference for you? Kind of ran out of gas in last year's final. What was the main difference between the two Finals?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: The bye. Just a different mindset. When we came here last year we were almost grateful and surprised by every win. This year when we beat UNLV, when we beat New Mexico and we beat UNLV, it was understood that that was the assignment and we had one more game to win.

I think just the expectation changed. And I will tell you that this team came back so hungry in the summer and in the preseason to get to this point with the additions of our freshmen and Roni and Cali.

I just thought we had a team that was built for this, and I've been saying it all year. I'm just really, really proud of our girls that we were able to get this done.

Q. I think part of being built for this moment is the ability like we've spoken about just for different players to step up at different times, the we over me mantra. What did you see from that standpoint tonight, and what's the significance for you?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: We just got a great group of girls and they're all excited for each other and they all care about each other and encourage each other. If you saw our bench, our huddles were tighter tonight. We were talking in the huddles. People were just trying to get us through.

Even the ones that weren't playing were completely locked in, and they're just as important as the ones that are on the floor. We talk about the bench being the game changers, whether they see the floor or they're calling out the scout, but they're just as important as the kids that are on the floor.

Again, I've been saying it. I will say it and continue to say it: Our depth has been our super power, and that's really what got us through today.

Q. In the offseason when you are recruiting Cali, what was it about her as a player and as a person that made you want to bring her into your locker room?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Her height at first. You know, she had a relationship with my associate head coach, so Kellie knew her prior to -- I mean, knew her from Colorado State.

So when she was in the portal Kellie and I had a conversation, and it was a no-brainer. We know who she is. She's an incredible human being. We knew that if given the chance, she would really shine in the role that we saw for her.

I'm really happy for her because she had a different experience, and for her to finish on top as a champion, I just think it's a testament to who she is and how hard she works, and I'm really excited for her. She played a hell of a game tonight.

Q. Defense is the DNA of San Diego State basketball. We saw it tonight shutting down Fertig. Yesterday literally with Villalobos bleeding for the team. When did you sense that the team was putting together the full, complete game that you were looking for to set up the run through this tournament?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: We just had great game plans. We were really prepared, and they were able to lock in and follow through with the game plan.

My staff spends hours watching film, and we meet. We get together. We figure out what we're going to do. I thought that the teams throughout for all three games we were really, really prepared.

In the first two games I thought we made minimal mistakes that gave us a good chance to win. Tonight was a little different. We were a little fatigued. We were making some mistakes, but I thought the will to win, the competitive spirit kind of kept putting us in a situation to win.

It just shows you, though, how good these teams are.



Wyoming is a very, very good team and a style that is very hard to play. They've been playing that way for 20-plus years. You know, they have a great coach and great players. We were able just to withstand their runs and got stops when we needed to.

Again, the defense down the stretch is really what put us over the top.

Q. Last year when we spoke, you talked about how the program and bringing in transfers. You like to have SDSU be a soft landing spot for players that may not have had the best experience before. Talk about how the transfers were able to become part of this program, one, and, two, just how gratifying it is to see that mission statement for this program leads to you cutting down the nets?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: I think we have everything we need to be successful at San Diego State. We have a president and athletic director that believes that athletics is a doorstep to the university. We have all the resources that we need.

That being said, having a nice mixture of returning kids, the transfers, and this unbelievable, kooky, fun, talented freshman class, we knew that we were built for something special.

I want to shout out to the kids that have been in the program for a while, because they accepted those new kids and brought them in like they were family. That, I think, is really what helped us this year make the run that we did.

There's not a lot of selfishness in our locker room. When you have a player-led team that can get in there and coach them up and hold them accountable, you're always going to have some success.

Q. Has been building for the program, the WNIT appearance two years ago, trip to the championship game last year, now you're going to March. Just personally what does this mean to you as a coach building the program to get to this point?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: You know, San Diego State, you say building, but we were just trying to get back to where we were. There were a lot of great players and coaches before me, and they were winning championships, so I'm grateful to get back to where we were.

Now we can hopefully continue to rise, but I want to shout out all the other players that have played not only for me, but for our program that have really helped us get here and

put San Diego State on the map.

We're not done yet. We have a lot to offer at San Diego State, and we're really proud of the student center and the locker room and excited to continue to play basketball.

Q. What does it mean to you when you have fans from San Diego State come year in, year out to these tournament games? Sometimes it feels like you just are playing Viejas Arena with how intense the crowd can be, and you have Kim's dad there and the crowd supporting, just what the vibrant energy brings to the team.

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Wyoming travels well, and I thought they had a really good crowd, but I only heard us. I love that. I love that.

I love that we're playing a little deeper into the week, so we had some crossover fans. Some of our men's fans were coming in too. But I want to shout-out the faithful Aztec women's basketball fans that have been with us through the good times and the bad times. It may not be a huge number, but they are loud, and they are loyal. I will forever be grateful.

Q. Just take a second. You sat there last year with Abby Prohaska and Jada Lewis and Sarah Barcello. Before that you sat there with Sophia Ramos, Yummy Morris. You've got to take a second to appreciate all those kids who came before these kids and helped you get where you got.

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: I was sending texts this morning when they were sending congratulation texts, all those kids and some others. I was saying, Thank you for helping me build this. Mercedes Staples, she was a big piece of this.

You got JD gave me the biggest compliment after we won. He said, You built it the right way. That's what I am most proud of is we were able to get here with compassion, competitive spirit, and loyalty, and that's what I'm going to take from all this.

Q. I've been waiting a year to ask you. Last year you had the quote of the tournament. You said that this program has had the blinker on for a long time, and we finally turned the corner. Where are you tonight?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: We're speeding down the highway right now.

Q. You had a five-point lead in both overtimes, and then Wyoming came back to tie the game. How hard is



it? You go to a third overtime, you get the four-point lead again, and you are thinking, are they going to do it a third time? What is it about the players that are able to lose the five-point lead twice and still take the lead again in the third overtime?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: That's just the fight that they have. They were refusing to lose. Again, it wasn't pretty basketball, but it was competitive, hard-fought basketball, and they were refusing to lose.

We got stops when we needed to, and we made free-throws when we needed to, and that was the difference in the game.

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