

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Colorado State Rams Coach Ryun Williams

Marta Leimane

Madelyn Bragg

Postgame Press Conference

Colorado State 56, Air Force 42

THE MODERATOR: For Colorado State we have student-athletes Madelyn Bragg, Marta Leimane, Coach Ryun Williams. Coach, I'll start with you.

RYUN WILLIAMS: First of all, congratulations to Air Force. That is an incredible run in this tournament. They were really difficult to beat today, and they're really difficult to beat every single time. Stacy should be very proud of her squad, and we were very fortunate to guard the way we did today and get a quality win, a championship win against an Air Force team we have a ton of respect for.

These ladies did it the way we do it. We guard. It wasn't easy offensively. There was just not a lot of flow. Couldn't get in sync, but we never got out of whack or out of sync with our toughness and how we guarded, and that was the key to today's victory.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Air Force and Milahnie seemed to suggest that it was the fatigue of four games in four days that led to 27.4% shooting. How much of it, though, was maybe facing a top-10 scoring defense?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Probably both. Those kids play with such incredible effort. I'm sure they had to be somewhat fatigued, but I would like to think that the Latvian Bear here had a lot to say about that. And our entire team, we were really connected defensively. Everything was well-contested, and I thought once we started rebounding the ball better in the second half, we finally got some traction offensively.



These kids find a way. Some nights it's scoring it; some nights it's guarding. Tonight it was the team D.

Q. Marty, you seemed to know what Milahnie wanted to do before she did it. You really kept her from going right, which is how she generates her offense. How locked in were you on what you wanted to do to her tonight?

MARTA LEIMANE: I think she has a really great pull-up, and she has that little cross to her pull-up, and I think I kind of studied that before and just locked in on D. It was a good day. It was a good day for defensive.

Q. Maddie, again, you guys have really thrived on this. Is it almost fitting that you won a game like this because defense really was your foundation all year?

MADELYN BRAGG: Yeah. I mean, Air Force is a really talented team. They have a lot of players that can really change the pace of the game if they get going.

And we're a defensive team, and we knew that tied up at half that we were going to have to come out with a better effort on defense, because a lot of their points I feel like in the first half were from our defensive errors and we knew that this was a kind of do-or-die situation.

I am really proud of my teammates for locking it in in the second half and taking away their second-chance opportunities as well.

Q. Game-winning shot the first night and then 7 of 8 performance tonight. How are you feeling offensively?

MADELYN BRAGG: Better tonight than the last two nights. Or last night, I guess. Yeah, I feel good. I'm happy that I was scoring well and I'm happy that my teammates were trusting me with it in my hands tonight.

Q. Marta, how tense really was that game? Because even though you guys took the lead with 7:33 left in the third quarter, you never gave it up. It never felt comfortable until you got that 9-0 run late. Did you



ever get a chance to take a sigh of relief or take a breath do you feel in this game?

MARTA LEIMANE: I think it got really tense in the end, as you said, but I think Coach does a good job to just calm us down at timeout, tell us to take a deep breath, and I think it really, really helps.

Q. For both of you guys, it's one thing when you have to deal with the loss of a star player in the middle of a game, but what has the last 24 hours been like preparing to not have Lexus out there?

MADELYN BRAGG: Yeah, I mean, we really missed her tonight. One of our assistant coaches, Say, told us that she was our second leading defensive rebounder, so we were going to have to make up for the lack of those.

And then offensively Lex was a huge piece of our offense. But Marty stepped up tonight defensively and offensively. I mean, she did her job, and I'm really proud of her and I'm really proud of all of us for stepping up and doing that one for Lexus, because we know how bad she wanted to be out there and we knew we had to step up and win this for her.

MARTA LEIMANE: Yeah, lex is an amazing player offensively and defensively. She is really, really tough, and I think that's what we kind of missed against Air Force, who is a really, really tough team.

But we kind of stepped together and just did it for her and for each other.

Q. Outside of just the physical battle, what do you think you kind of won in the mental battle down the stretch?

MARTA LEIMANE: I think we were a little more prepared, like, mentally because we were a higher seed. We beat them two times already and we knew we could do that third time as well. I think they knew it too. They really, really fought their -- fought it. Yeah, we just had that behind us, and we just need to do step forward.

Q. Maddie, I know you haven't had much time to cool down yet, but has it really set in going to the Big Dance yet?

MADELYN BRAGG: Not really. I mean, it's been four years of this, and last year I was still at a Division II, so I've never had the opportunity to play on this big of a stage.

But I mean, growing up and watching those players, it just means so much more to me to be able to finally do this my senior year with these people, too. I wouldn't want to do it

with anyone else.

I'm just really excited and happy for us all.

Q. Kind of following that, Maddie, when you're in transfer recruiting, was this the vision of what you were hoping this year would be?

MADELYN BRAGG: Yeah, of course. I knew that we were going to be good and I knew that we had a shot. Honestly, throughout this whole tournament I've never doubted it. I've never had that feeling where it's, like, okay, they might sneak up and get the upset. In any of these games, UNLV too, it was the same mindset. I'm so confident in this team's abilities.

We've persevered throughout trials and tribulations all year long. That's what we do. We're scrappers. We've got all the pieces to be successful. I'm just really proud, and I knew that we were capable of doing this from the jump.

Q. Marty, for you, senior year, what does this moment mean to win this championship?

MARTA LEIMANE: For some of us we've been here four years, and I think we haven't done that job these past three years. We kind of talked about it too. This is it. This is our last chance to do this together and just bring our whole heart in it.

I think just the emotions that we shared together and all the memories, it's been really awesome, and I think that's exactly what led us to this victory.

Q. With Marta, for those of us outside of Colorado, we know that CSU has the big rivalries with Wyoming. It's fun when you go against CU, but can you just speak to what the series against Air Force has been like, you going through these battles for four years now?

MARTA LEIMANE: I think it's been really, really cool and awesome and very exciting to see and actually experience it. I think over these past years we kind of struggled at their place.

It's always been like kind of a struggle, but it's really, really fun to go against like a rivalry. So it's been really, really cool.

Q. Just curious, Marta, after four years when you finally get to climb that ladder, what's going through your head?

MARTA LEIMANE: Honestly, I had no idea what to do. I didn't know how to cut the net. I was just doing something,



but it was really, really fun.

I'm glad that I get to share it with these people and get to call them my second family.

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

RYUN WILLIAMS: Marty was so tired from playing 40 minutes, I thought she was going to fall off the ladder (smiling).

Q. Ryun, Lexus, you lose her on offense. She's obviously your leading scorer. Defensively, she was the one that had Perry with the assignments in those games. Was there any question of who was going to get it tonight and why was it Marta?

RYUN WILLIAMS: There was no question. You need length. You need experience on Perry. She is unbelievable. You know, when Lex is out of the game, especially at Moby. She did a great job on her, and that's when we kind of got some separation two weeks ago.

So we had all the confidence in the world in Marty, but she was always fresh when she guarded Perry a couple of weeks ago.

I mean, there were a couple of times I looked at Marty, she couldn't even see straight she was so tired. We played her 40 minutes. She was the one kid that we felt could really kind of bother, get to the pull-up. Marty is a very instinctive, smart defender. That's what you need to have on Perry. So is Bargesser.

We only had one option, to be honest with you.

Q. Perry does like to go to her right to get her offense generated. It seemed like Marty camped out on the on that side of the body all night. Just how locked in was she? Was it even exceeding your expectations?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Yeah, it was. We're such a scout-heavy team, right? We really do a good job of taking away tendencies and not allowing the opponent to get to their strength.

Marty was really locked into not letting her get to her spot going right. But it was also a collective effort. There was some switching going on out there where everybody had to take a turn on not letting her get to her spot.

And we just -- she's still going to score the ball. She's just too good, but it surely needs to be contested, and it can't come easy for her. I thought we wore her down as that

game moved on.

Q. How impressive is the resiliency that you feel that you see in your team considering you did lose Lexus for a major chunk of last night? It didn't seem to affect their resolve. Brooke struggles early tonight; never quits; still keeps doing what she's doing. What have you learned about this team maybe in the last two days?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Yeah, and really here the last half of this season. Sometimes when we've had those struggles, maybe a tough first half or whatever, it's easy to maybe kind of get some soggy cereal going, but I think the group learned that that just never is a positive thing.

Everybody reset all night long, and that's what this group has done. I thought Brooke did a tremendous job of resetting. She just stayed on the attack, right? She just kept trying to find it.

She found it enough times, and so did Bragg. She had to work for everything she had tonight.

But the 7 for 8, we had to play through something. Losing Bargesser, we facilitate a lot of things through that Young lady, and if she's not scoring it, she's responsible for a lot of the things that we do offensively.

So to lose that tonight, we just felt Bragg was -- it had to be a huge option.

Q. When you look at Bragg's performance, we say it's 7 of 8, but it also mostly came against the defensive player of the year, who eventually fouled out. How impressive considering that factor was Maddie's performance?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Very, very impressive. Maddie requires a lot of attention. They were very physical with Maddie, and I thought she kept her poise and composure fighting for her position all night.

Maddie had a really good game in Colorado Springs, and we just went back to a few things that kind of worked there. When she got to her spot, she had the size advantage. She produced, right?

You still got to make the shot, and we were struggling with shot-making from some other spots, but not from that one.

Q. Toward the end or at the end what was the overriding emotion for you when you kind of realized you had this one?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Man, I'm just so happy for those kids. To see Hannah Ronsiek smile like that, to see Marty, you know, Jadyn, those kids that have been here for four years, I mean, that is -- just to see the joy on their face. That means a lot to a coach.

And I like that it wasn't easy, right? It was not easy. Mainly that. I was happy for those Young ladies. They work. Our team really, really works. They deserve this. They've earned it, and hard work paid off.

Q. Mentioned how the team learned to not let bad moments carry on. Was there a moment in the season or kind of what is it that led to this group being able to push those aside and win games like this?

RYUN WILLIAMS: We're 20 -- what's our record? 27-7. So there weren't a lot of low moments, to be honest with you. No season is ever going to be smooth sailing. No season.

We had a few struggles there in the middle. The home loss to New Mexico. Then the loss to San Diego State. Then they just regrouped. The loss at Vegas. We challenged them at Vegas. We learned that we've got to be tougher. We've got to be able to reset better.

Everybody's got to get better. If everybody can just give 2% more the rest of the way, you're going to be hard to beat, and they really took that to heart. We only lost one game since that, and that was at San Diego State.

For these kids to keep getting better, that's all a coach can ask for.

Q. How much confidence does it give you going into this next big game, having a team that really just can win the game down the stretch?

RYUN WILLIAMS: We've won games a lot of different ways, but we always have confidence in our resolve and our toughness and our stick-to-it-iveness, all of that.

We've always found a way to just be opportunistic. Going all the way back to Oregon State, Gonzaga, those hard-fought games. The big shots at the right time, these kids have delivered.

Even on offensive nights where it hasn't been maybe the most rhythmic or beautiful thing, they just find a way. That's the sign of a champion.

Q. As a coach with all the wins that you've had in this league, though, it's been ten years since you made it back to the tournament. Does that emotion hit you at

the end of this game, because it doesn't always happen often?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Well, I don't know if I've gotten to that emotion yet, to be honest. My emotion is really that of total joy for our team, for our coaches, for our university. This is a big deal, and it's hard to win, you know? Not many teams win this thing. It's very, very difficult to win.

So we just keep giving yourself opportunities. You're going to kick down the door, and we finally did it tonight.

I'm sure, Mike, I'll look maybe sometime tomorrow or something and just, like, about damn time we do it again.

Q. When points are kind of coming at a premium, you have already touched on it, but Maddie getting to her spots and really having to work for her nine second-half points, Brooke in the pressure cooker with her free-throws late, and really just having a pretty wide array of players that can find ways to get things done, how was that tonight?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Everybody kind of had their moment there down the stretch. Brooke was really good. She kind of did the Nash dribble and just surveyed, surveyed, until she got to a spot where she could score it.

The Kloe-to-Bragg out of the timeout, out of the ball screen was huge. Kloe's one-on-one Barkley battle with 13 was huge. We coupled that with stops, and that's allowed us to get the separation.

It's one thing to score, but now you've got to go get some stops. We strung a lot of those together in that second half. That was a big-time defensive performance in the second half.

Q. The thing that stood out to me most about your side all season has been the balance. Could you just speak to how the team developed the cohesion and chemistry with so many senior leaders and then key sophomore performers like Carlson and Froebe?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think one thing, everybody -- they accept their roles really well and we allow them to get to their strengths. Some nights it might be a little easier than others, to be honest, and some nights it might call for Maddie, some nights she might have six, seven on her, you know?

And so maybe it's a driving game, and it's a Brooke game. Maybe we've got a pro mismatch with Kloe and it's a Kloe game. So there's always a way to, you know, facilitate some positive offense, and we just have the right weapons

to do that.

We believe in all of them. Every time we've kind of called on them where they have the advantage -- and college basketball is about matchups. It just is, okay? Especially this time of year. Every time that we find something that we feel can be an advantage, our kids really thrive in those moments and have excelled all season long.

Q. Then I asked Marta about this, but can you just give a better, deeper explanation of what the series means between Colorado and --

RYUN WILLIAMS: You didn't like her answer?

Q. You have more history with the rivalry, so to speak.

RYUN WILLIAMS: Marty probably doesn't even know where Air Force is, to be honest. She probably thinks it's in Denver.

Q. Just what does that mean in the pantheon of stuff for CSU, and any potential future for it?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Listen, I grew up watching the WAC, the Mountain West, so the CSU-Wyoming games, the Air Force games, right, and all you have to do is look at our fan base and how passionate they are about that.

So we know that's an important game.

It's throw out the records. It's always going to be a scratch and claw. It's always going to be a grinder when you play Air Force. It just is. Probably in every sport.

I think our volleyball coach would say the same thing. I think our football coach would probably say the same thing. I'm sure Ollie is going to say that.

That's a lot of respect for Air Force, but to beat them three times, to beat Wyoming twice this year, kudos to our team, because those are rival games that mean a lot. We do address that when we do play those teams. It's like this is bigger than just tonight. I mean, this is deep. It goes back years.

To beat them one last time in the Mountain West, I'm happy for our CSU fans.

Q. Coach, if I would have gone back beginning of the season, day one before the first game and told you not only would you be winning the Mountain West Championship, but without the player who made the Mountain West team, other than what are you doing in my house, what would you have said?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, I would have said, don't count this team out. That's what I would have said. I mean, this group, we came together June 14th. The leadership of the new oldies and the oldies that we retained and just that core group, you could see in the summertime that this group, they really like to compete, and they really like to work.

I mean, they were in that gym. We had coaches getting up and at the office at 4:30 in the morning because they want to work. So I'm not surprised at that.

I think the early success that this group had, the big road wins that we had early in the season, it just kept building the confidence and the belief, and we knew we had a tough team. We knew we had some weaponry. We just had to keep trying to put it together, and these kids were tremendous.

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