

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**Colorado State Rams**

**Coach Ali Farokhmanesh**

**Carey Booth**

**Jase Butler**

Postgame Press Conference



Colorado State 67, Fresno State 63

THE MODERATOR: For Colorado State we have student-athletes Jase Butler and Carey Booth, and Coach Ali Farokhmanesh.

Let's get your thoughts on tonight's game, Coach.

ALI FAROKHMANESH: I haven't been able to do that yet, but congratulations to the women's team for winning the conference championship. That was awesome for us to be here and see that. We spend so much time seeing them from the summer workouts and everything else, so the amount of work that they put in to accomplish that, that was fun for us to be here and watch that, and get to be in person and watch that in the first half.

But as far as this game goes, we said it was going to be tough. We knew it was going to be tough. I think the first games are always the hardest. It takes a minute to adjust to the atmosphere, to everything that's going on, the pageantry of being in a tournament. It took us a little bit of time, but I think this team, I think it showed its growth throughout the year.

We don't win this game in November, because this was a defensive game to start. If we didn't play the way we did defensively, we're down by 20 at halftime back in November. So for us to guard the way we did in the first half to give ourselves a chance and then settle into the game, that's what I was most impressed with.

Then obviously Jase had a heck of a game, and his teammates did a great job of continuing to find him and running actions for him. I thought what we said the things that we had to dominate on, we said the glass. We got 13

offensive rebounds. That was one of our least amount of turnovers. We won the turnover battle. They shot the ball well from two. I thought they had a good game plan. No. 9 was great in the paint. They kind of attacked our ball screen defense from the very start, but we won the free-throw battle too.

So all the things we talked about about eliminating luck, we actually did at the highest levels. When you're not shooting the ball well, your offense isn't clicking, I thought that's what the game came down to is we eliminated the luck of winning in March.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Jase, you had a career high in threes tonight. Especially as the game gets down to the wire, how do you kind of stay calm, keep hitting them, and what was working for you all day really?**

JASE BUTLER: Honestly, I got a lot of my threes off kickouts from offensive rebounds from my teammates. We do a lot of drills in practice just trying respacement and get open, and my teammates found me. Credit to them.

I just had the confidence to make the open shot.

**Q. How big was that stretch where I think Jev got a steal layup, Jojo gets a steal, goes and gets a three. How much energy did that bring you guys right there?**

CAREY BOOTH: I mean, a lot of energy. That's what we talk about, the winning plays. We like to see a guy diving on the floor for a ball. It gives everyone energy. I say it was the turning point in the game for us. If that play doesn't happen, I don't know if we win. I feel like it was as impactful as any shot or any rebound, so...

**Q. Jase, for you obviously there's scoring, big defensive assignments. Where is the biggest growth in this team defensively kind of like Coach was talking about? Where have you grown the most defensively this year?**



JASE BUTLER: I think we've all just bought in on helping each other. Like, it's a team sport. We were playing a lot of defense. I feel like selfishly earlier to start the season, not helping each other out. I think that's honestly been the biggest growth to this point. We're all flying around and just trying to make the next play for each other.

**Q. You guys, it kind of reaches a head with 2:50 left. You are both tied 61-61. You have two time-outs. What was the conversation? What did you guys want to do to eventually come out on top today?**

CAREY BOOTH: I mean, just staying the course and sticking to our principles really. Like, down the stretch, nothing really changes. The game stays the same. The ball stays the same. The rim stays the same. If you just invest in each other and stick to the game plan, then things will work itself out, so that's probably the conversation that was had.

**Q. Do either of you get deja vu in the times that you guys played Fresno State earlier in the season and the way you came back from a deficit like that?**

JASE BUTLER: Yeah, I think Fresno played us tough every time we played them. We know they're a good team and what they're capable of. Give credit to them. They fought, and I think we just were able to throw a little bit more punches at the end of the game.

**Q. Coach mentioned having some time to settle in. Now that you played your first game, I guess how does this environment feel just to be here?**

CAREY BOOTH: I mean, it's great. I saw a lot of Rams fans there. Shout-out to them for showing out to the game. Yeah, it's just great to get out there, see the fans, see the rims, see the ball go in. It's definitely an advantage to play a game early, so...

**Q. Jase, can you just talk about what the coordination was kind of like early on. Maybe how you overcame that and turned things around in the second half.**

JASE BUTLER: Honestly, we just weren't making shots offensively. I thought we did a pretty good job on defense until kind of the last four-minute stretch and the first four-minute stretch. I think in the second half just trying to change our energy, like we're still in this game. It's a two-possession game. We haven't played great.

Then just flipping the switch in the second half. Like we talked about earlier, that play where Jojo dove on the floor and Jev got the and-one. That really got the momentum going for us. I think from there we just never looked back.

**Q. This is for both Jase and Carey. Both of you guys had three offensive rebounds over the course of this night, and you are going up against a 7-footer in Jacques. How would you describe the rebounding battle over the course of this game?**

CAREY BOOTH: I feel like getting extra possessions is just the biggest advantage you could really have. So when you crash and guys tag up to the rim, so you can get extra possession for your teammate or just for your team in general. Getting those helped us win the game, so I would say that.

JASE BUTLER: To add on, I feel like the emphasis for us has just been to win the rebounding battle every game we play. I think just no matter our size, we kind of know where the ball is coming off. Certain times you can kind of gauge it. I think just being active and just being aware to get the rebounds.

**Q. You talked about the defensive. Can you just talk a little bit about how Jojo impacted the defensive today.**

CAREY BOOTH: Yeah, just being a pest. That's really all you could really ask for for someone coming in off the bench, especially a point guard who is a freshman. Like, that's how you earn trust in your teammates and also everyone in general. Just pressuring the ball, doing the little things, making the right plays, and he does that every time. We love him for that, and he helps us win a lot of games.

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

**Q. What was difficult in the first half keeping Heidebreder and Kocevar at bay? What were the defensive kind of adjustments you made to keep them a little more quiet in the second half?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: I mean, I thought we played really well the first probably 14 minutes of the game. It was the last six minutes I thought we kind of fell apart defensively, which was ironic, because then our offense picked up during that stretch, too.

He was getting behind our ball screen coverage. Our guards were not doing a good job of physically getting into the ball. I thought we lost our hand activity. He made some nice passes, but it's easy to make a nice pass when you got a cone guarding you for a little bit.

I thought we adjusted with just our ball pressure and the boxer mentality of just constant activity. We were way

better at that in the second half. I thought we got way more disruptive and then just let them do what they wanted to do out on the perimeter. But the physicality and then the hand activity.

**Q. DeShawn Gory got going a little bit in the second half, but you made them work for everything. What did you like about the defensive effort on him and maybe keeping him from his spots in that little runner?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, we kind of lost some coverage there. We iced a couple of ball screens, which I don't really know why we did that. Then we weren't up to touch anymore, and that's when he started snaking that ball screen back and got to his right hand, which was everything we talked about not happening.

He got to it a couple of times, but for the most part I thought we made him take a bunch of tough shots. We crowded him. It was great to see him and Heidbreder have four turnovers each. We said that was a key to the game was making them play in crowds.

A couple of times Heidbreder -- Gory got those first two threes to go in the start of the second half, but the rest of the time, right, sometimes that's not a bad thing if you get a guy to make a couple of shots early, because then they want to keep shooting them. That's kind of what happened in the last three minutes of that game because he had a couple of open looks towards the end of the game that he missed.

Then Heidbreder a couple of times, we lost him. We dropped our hands. Credit to him. I think I've seen enough of him now. I'm glad he's not in the league anymore. But to play a full 40 minutes like that and have 26 points, that's impressive.

**Q. We've talked a lot about Jase and his growth, but in a moment like this to step up, hit those shots, I guess his performance, what did you appreciate most tonight?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Zero hesitation. Zero hesitation with everything he did. We ran an action for him that we haven't ran for him all year. Obviously he knows the play, but hadn't run it for him all year, and he drills that big three for us. I think that put us up three at that point. Then we ran that last possession when we ran -- it was a play we ran before, and he drove it and made the play off it.

They did a good job of sitting on his drives for the most part for the game, but we ran a little different action. He drove it and he made a tough play to finish that to put us up five down the stretch.

It's funny, it's everything I thought Jase was going to be coming out of high school. We always say this. I'm the classic guy that everybody says no to, and then I get the second chance the next time around.

It's awesome to see Jase from June to now how much confidence he has. He's earned all of it, and there's a reason why he's in the position he is. He works his tail off. He's one of the hardest workers on our team. I think everyone can see it. He's one of the hardest playing guys, not only on our team, but I think in this whole league.

**Q. You talked a lot about mentality, especially making sure that even if you miss one, you get back up again. What did you see out there today that represented that, especially in the second half?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: I thought there was a little frustration that settled in in the first eight minutes. You could visibly see that. Our guys are not good at lying about that to me. When you are with somebody that long, you can see all of it.

I thought one of the best examples of that is we ran that driving play for Kyle, and he has a point-blank layup, and he misses it. Then the next time down he just faces up and shoots a midrange jumper. I thought that was kind of the definition of the group just making the next play.

But then I thought when they went up eight, our response -- and we've talked about it a couple of times now -- but our response and how all those hustle plays we made, and I thought Jojo made the biggest hustle play of the night when he got that loose ball that led to that three. That's what this team has been about.

I think in March you have to have those moments and make those plays that change a game. That was the turning point of the whole game when we were down eight and went on that little run to make it 46-45.

**Q. They talked a little bit about how you were seeing a lot of green in Thomas & Mack today. Did you feel the energy of the crowd in that moment when you finally got the lead back up again?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, 100%. When you're not making shots, there's not a lot to cheer for, so I get it, but I think we needed that little jolt. It comes from our guys. They got to get the crowd back involved again. But as soon as that play happened, you could feel the momentum change and the crowd started getting into it. Then our guys responded in a huge way.

It was great to see so much green and green and gold in the building tonight, and our guys definitely felt it.

**Q. Just what are you expecting, Coach, against a good Brian Dutcher side? He's experienced in this tournament. What are you expecting, and what are you looking forward to in the next round against the Aztecs?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: He is a little more experienced than me in this tournament, but -- I don't know. We just won this game. I would rather not think about them yet, to be honest.

No, David Velasquez is one of the assistants and probably one of my best friends in this entire league. We talk a lot. We probably talked too much in the last two weeks, so I'm not really looking forward to playing them next. That's what you want. You want a challenge. You want to play the best teams in the league. You want to see where you stand against the top teams in the league and one of the best coaches in the country.

There's not a lot of coaches that have gone to a national championship. He recruited the Fab 5. The résumé that Coach Dutcher has, it really is second to none. So I know our guys are looking forward to it, it's going to be an absolute challenge. It's going to be a dogfight, and I know San Diego State is going to have a ton of fans here, so it will be a packed building tomorrow night at 6:00 p.m.

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