

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Nevada Wolf Pack

Coach Steve Alford

Corey Camper, Jr.

Vaughn Weems

Postgame Press Conference



Nevada 84, Grand Canyon 80

THE MODERATOR: For Nevada we have student-athletes Corey Camper, Jr., Vaughn Weems, and Coach Steve Alford. Coach, start with you tonight.

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, just super proud of our guys. Worked awfully hard. I think they're playing with great joy right now.

I think it's the first time they've lost a game at half because they're well-coached and very talented, a very good team. Glory be to God. We have incredible opportunities this year, and very appreciative of that.

As I look at the stats, 46 free-throws. That puts a smile -- as a former Elk's hoop shoot guy, I love it when comes down to free-throws. I'm old-school enough that I don't want to get rid of the foul shot, and the foul shot was really good to us tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. 86 total free-throws this game is a new conference record, conference tournament record, for both of you guys. When you hear that, just what's your reaction? How do you kind of stay calm and focused when it's this constant stop and go?

COREY CAMPER JR: Yeah, I would just say just getting up to the line and making them. When each guy on this team is knocking down free-throws and it's going your way, it feels great.

VAUGHN WEEMS: Yeah, and we practice free-throws a lot in practice. It's a real emphasis whenever we practice,

so...

STEVE ALFORD: Did you understand, CC?

COREY CAMPER JR: See, I told you.

STEVE ALFORD: He from Arkansas. Just want to make sure you understood what he said.

Q. Can you describe the runs that you made in the start of the second half, especially with Vaughn getting to the line in some tough shots and then you had that dunk over those two guys too?

COREY CAMPER JR: Yeah, I would just say my teammates trusting me and Vaughn. When things not going our way, Vaughn, hitting Vaughn on the back doors, Vaughn getting offensive rebounds, big-time, trusting this man right here when it goes down to the last second.

Q. Vaughn, what was it like to just be a part of this game? It was a fun one out there.

VAUGHN WEEMS: It was a great experience. I don't think I've had an experience like this ever in my life. It was really fun, and I like how the crowd was into it. It got loud toward the end.

Like Coach said, it came down to free-throws. When it got loud, it was ready.

Q. And your reaction to Corey's dunk?

VAUGHN WEEMS: Man, if you look at me, I'm on the bench screaming, head-tap, pointing ought old boy. It was fun. I liked it.

COREY CAMPER JR: Peyton white knuckle is better. Yeah, his dunk was better.

Q. You guys had a few of them. Corey, 27 points, 6 rebounds, another big game for you. What did it mean to lead this group and what did it mean to have a big game in the biggest game in the year thus far?

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COREY CAMPER JR: It felt great. Knowing my teammates trust me to lead them and trust me to make tough shots like that, that feels great.

Q. What was that atmosphere like for you?

COREY CAMPER JR: It was great. Just having the crowd get on our butts. I feel like that makes us play harder as a team. GCU, they was chirping, but we love the chirping.

Q. Can you guys just each speak on that joy that Coach alluded to and how you guys are really coming together at a good time and seem to be enjoying each other?

COREY CAMPER JR: Yeah, the joy is great. Inside the locker room going into the first half the joy wasn't there. Coach let us know that they was being way more physical. They was pushing us around.

So I feel like second half that was our emphasis coming in, being more physical, being a tougher team, and at the end of the day it went our way and it was lovely.

VAUGHN WEEMS: Yeah, going into halftime it hasn't been the first time that we've on been down all season. We were just talking to each other, staying together, saying, this isn't the first time; we got this; we can stay together; and we're going to come out there and handle business and do what we were supposed to do.

Q. You guys move now to Friday night. Each of you guys getting to face Utah State for a third time, what do you expect with a trip to the championship game on the line now?

COREY CAMPER JR: It's going to be a very physical game just like it was tonight. They're going to try to come out, hit, and we just got to hit harder.

VAUGHN WEEMS: I expect it to be a great one. Come watch.

Q. Corey, you talked about the crowd and how it was all involved in everything. You guys, we've talked extensively about Nevada's student section, everything, and it felt like it was a student section of GCU's of their own. For both of you, how does it feel to go against that and still come out top?

COREY CAMPER JR: It feels great. Just knowing that our student section has our back just like theirs, and we expect that. So just knowing that both sides are chirping, both sides are into the game, both sides are having fun, that

puts a smile on our face and makes us want to play harder.

VAUGHN WEEMS: Yeah, like playing against big crowds that are going against me, because it gives me a reason to go out there and keep playing harder, because at the end of the game I want to be the one talking to you when you're quiet, not you're talking to me during the game.

Q. Then what's a key for both of you going into Utah State, knowing that there's a lot of momentum in both of y'all's sails?

COREY CAMPER JR: I would say stay focused, stay together. It's going to be a tough game. It's probably going to be a close one. Just have each other's back and just stay together.

VAUGHN WEEMS: Yeah, we're going to go on runs. They're going to go on runs. Like Corey said, we just got to stay together and make sure that we come out and punch first. Don't get punched first.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse our second athletes. Questions for Coach.

Q. Steve, I guess just what makes you the proudest after that 40-minute game?

STEVE ALFORD: Well, like I said in the opener, this is a really good basketball team. They finished fourth for a reason. They've been very good all year and getting Shaw back has made them deeper. They've been really healthy late in the year, and they've been on a really good run of playing really good basketball.

To be down six at half and do something no other team has done to them this year speaks volumes, because we got a lot of respect for who they are and what they're about. I thought our guys showed a lot of grit. We scored 50 in the second half, and we did a good job of getting to the free-throw line, and we took advantage of it.

Then there was a lot of things that were pretty even. Paint was pretty even. We won the paint by a little bit, but we had eight turnovers at half. Only three in the second half, in a game that had a lot of stop and go to it.

I thought that was huge for not just our offense, but our defense. We gave up ten points at halftime. Ten of the 34 points they had were off of our mistakes, so we really talked about that. I thought our guys really responded out of halftime just playing better basketball.

Q. I guess what was that halftime message, and how did you see it really come to fruition right away with



that 7-0 run out of the break?

STEVE ALFORD: Just that we didn't think we'd played very well. And you give a lot of credit to Grand Canyon obviously, but we felt like just telling our guys, that wasn't our best 20. Let's go out and let's make the changes that you've got to make.

Those things are getting in a stance, being more physical defensively, finishing plays offensively, not turning the ball over, and doing a good job on the backboard. We ended up winning the backboard by five, and I think that was huge.

We didn't live and die with the 3-point line. We only took ten threes. It tells me we went to the paint, and we drove it hard. I really like what Vaughn did in the second half, what Kaleb did in the second half. It was really good.

We were battling major foul trouble. We had Elijah and Joel in foul trouble all night in first half and second half. I just thought our bench came in and did a lot of good things.

Q. Another big game for Corey. What has he meant? Obviously you guys need him at his best at this time.

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, Jarod and I took him through last night, and Coach Neal, of just squared and cutting, off-ball cutting, because I think now it's not just about -- he's so fast.

He's so athletic that it's not about getting away being fast enough to get away from your guy. It's about how you set up cuts, so we showed him a really good ten, 12 clips of Jarod when Jarod was here, and Jarod really learned how to do that.

I thought today he was really good at stop and go, change of direction, change of pace. He's really gotten good at reading defenses, but he's getting everybody's best defender.

Tonight he's 27-6 in 34 minutes. In the first half when we weren't gelling yet, he did a lot of things in the first half to keep us in it.

Q. As you go into the semis now, your thoughts on getting Utah State for a third time, and what is in store for tomorrow night?

STEVE ALFORD: That's what makes this league special. Each ladder you go up keeps getting better and better. Today was a really good basketball team that we got through, but now we're in the final four of our conference tournament.

We know whoever that final four is is going to be really talented, and we get the most talented maybe because they won the league.

So it's going to go through them, and we know they're very well-coached, they're really deep, they're old and experienced. They do a lot of good things on both sides of the ball.

So we got to get back to the hotel, get some rest, get some treatment, and coaches got to get to work. Bottom line is you got to play good. You've got to play good basketball this time of year to have a chance, and we know that's going to be no different tomorrow.

Q. Coach, facing back-to-back teams that have such a good fan base presence here, I guess just what kind of message goes into that having to face a fan base like that back-to-back?

STEVE ALFORD: A fan base what?

Q. Just having to face a fan base like that back-to-back, GCU travel well; Utah State travels well. Having to do that back-to-back games in a tournament like this?

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, obviously the guys said it, the atmosphere is great. I will tell you as a player there's times you don't know which fan base is yours cheering. I mean, the game is fast. It's not you play offense and then you stop and defense comes on. It's a very fast-paced game.

This game is physical, and we've always had great atmospheres here. Been in it 13 years. I used to complain about it being here, but it's a good atmosphere. Vegas is a really good spot. It allows your fans to get here. Hopefully more of our contingent can get in.

We appreciate the ones that are here. Now we're in the semis. You're two steps away from a championship, so hopefully our contingent of fans now can travel even more tonight and in the morning because, yeah, obviously Utah State has a big crowd base here. We saw that in the first game.

Q. You mentioned about getting treatment back at the hotel. Obviously this was a four, five seed match-up. Is there ever a benefit of maybe getting a game under your belt before at least a Thursday day game?

STEVE ALFORD: That's a great question, Joe, because I've always said that. We mentioned that to our guys last night. You try mind games a lot anyway, but I've always



thought -- it's not that you want to be in the Wednesday game. That's not what your goal is, but then once you're there, you saw that last night in the nightcap.

I think it's -- you know, if you can get that first one, then you've been in the building, you've been in the atmosphere. Now obviously Grand Canyon did a very good job in the first half, but our guys -- now we were in our fourth half.

Now, it does flip as it keeps going. It gets harder for the teams that play on Wednesday, because you've got to win four in four, want three in three. That's why we got to get back, got to get treatments, rest, because each day, each ring that you climb, it gets harder and harder.

Q. You talked about the first half. I'm curious the first play out of the second half, Corey Camper got that three you drew up for him. How much did that spearhead and energize your guys and the importance of the execution?

STEVE ALFORD: We talked about it at halftime. Take care of the basketball. We're going to make our shots. We've been a good shooting team all year. We knew we had the ball coming out at halftime.

So we were only down six, so we were down two possessions. Not necessarily knew we were going to get a three, but Coach Neal is tremendous with our offense. He's an incredible offensive coordinator, and that's one of the reasons why we only turn it over about nine times a game and we get good shots. It's through the discipline of his offense.

He drew that up as well as you could draw it up, and our players have to go and execute it. Our guys really executed it. To get that first one, it also ended up being a run for us. By the time we got to the first media timeout, we were actually ahead.

We didn't anticipate that happening, but four minutes into the second half we had erased the deficit that we had at halftime.

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