

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**Colorado State Rams**

**Ali Farokhmanesh**

**Jase Butler**

**Brandon Rechsteiner**

Postgame Press Conference



San Diego State 71, Colorado State 62

THE MODERATOR: We have Brandon Rechsteiner, Jase Butler, Coach Ali Farokhmanesh.

Coach, can we start with you with some thoughts on tonight's game?

ALI FAROKHMANESH: That was a battle. It was everything that we said it was going to be. You know, I know the guys feel this. I wish we would have had the last six minutes of the first half back. The offensive rebounding, that was the difference in the first half and kind of separated the game from that standpoint.

Yeah, that was the biggest difference to me was the offensive rebounding really separated it towards the end of that first half. The rest of the game, though, I mean, we gave up four offensive rebounds the rest of the time. But I mean, huge credit to Miles Heide in terms of the amount of offensive rebounds. Compton, they had ten between them. They made a few more plays than us down the stretch.

Our guys never gave in. We kept fighting. Cut the lead down to seven and eight a few times. Just proud of the fight that the guys showed.

We're a little banged up too, but they fought through it. I couldn't have asked for more from this group.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Coach Dutcher talked a little bit about how SDS got a bye before this. Do you think the game you had against Fresno State earlier, it affected the legs that you had out there today?**

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: No, it's on us. We should have never put ourselves in that position. Getting the first game out the way yesterday was good for us. Yeah, it probably paid a little bit of a factor, but it's no excuse. We were ready to go.

**Q. Talking about what it was like in the paint today. Can you talk about what was happening there for you guys?**

JASE BUTLER: I just thought they were being really aggressive. They're a long, athletic team. That forces us into some tough shots, and they played well in the paint, so credit to them.

**Q. Just what is it about their physicality that is the biggest challenge for you guys when you face San Diego State?**

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: Yeah, they gamble. They're super aggressive. They got shot blockers, and they play the passing lane and gaps. When you drive, they swarm to you. You got to be strong with the ball.

**Q. Do you feel like you guys as a team when you start hitting shots kind of surges momentum through a team for San Diego State, does it feel like almost defensively in rebounding that's kind of where they get their lifeline?**

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: That's their offense is their defense for sure. That's kind of what they're known for as far as I've been knowing about them.

**Q. For both of you guys. Obviously the emotion is heavy right now coming off of the game, but just what are your thoughts on kind of how this team came together, the growth that you guys showed over the course of this season?**

JASE BUTLER: I thought it was really special. This has probably been one of the most fun teams I've been a part of. Just to be 12-10 at one point, and everyone is looking



at us and saying things about us, and turning back around and just keep fighting. I think that's what I'm most proud of about our team is that we just kept fighting. I'm proud of the guys.

**Q. For either one of you guys, Coach Dutcher talked about just the quality of opponents here in this conference. What have you learned through the Mountain West regular stretch and then obviously this tournament?**

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: Yeah, it's a good league. You have to show up ready to play. You saw yesterday San Jose knocked off Boise. It's a really good league, competitive. I'm excited to see what happens in March Madness.

**Q. Both of you guys I don't feel played at other schools before coming here. What has this experience been like playing for Coach Ali and what can you kind of say about him?**

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: Yeah, I was just telling Jase, it's the most emotional year of basketball I've ever had. Just to go through so much and for him to keep showing up and pouring into us and individually working us out, it's tough to put into words, but man, he's the best coach, so...

JASE BUTLER: Yeah, I would just say, like Ali, our whole staff, they care about us as people on and off the floor. So I think when things got tough for us, we all stuck together, and we knew the coaches believed in us, and also wanted the best for us. I just can't thank them enough for how they believed in us and kept pushing us throughout the season.

**Q. Is there a desire to play more basketball if that opportunity arises?**

JASE BUTLER: For sure. We're competitors, so we want to keep playing.

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: Yeah.

**Q. Can you talk about the last six minutes of the contest? You held them to no field goals. Is that kind of one of the ways that you kind of wanted to finish and the situation that you guys had?**

BRANDON RECHSTEINER: For sure. I think it's a testament to our whole season. We're down, and we just keep fighting the last six minutes. They have no field goals. Didn't turn out how we wanted to. Wish we made some more shots, took care of the ball down the stretch, but I'm proud of just the guys. Jevin as a senior, so...

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

**Q. The Rams finished shooting around 33% from the field. Was that more about the shot selection or more of the physicality of SDU's defense?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Both. I think the physicality led to some of the shot selection too. Yeah, I'll just leave it at that because I don't want to say anything else about that specifically, but yes.

**Q. Emotions obviously high after a game like this. Just kind of what is the message to the team, and what are your thoughts on kind of what you've been through as a unit here these last couple of months?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, when we were 12-10 and 3-8 in the league -- obviously we had some injuries and some other things going on that got us to that point, but I think I got so many text messages and people asking my wife if I was okay and stuff.

It just puts it in perspective of it is basketball, but at the end of the day, I thought our guys really fought and stayed together, and that's hard to do. Especially when you have a bunch of new guys coming from different places that also haven't had success where they had been before necessarily. I think it's easy to give in. Not quit necessarily, but just give in and go your own separate ways.

For them to stick together and trust in us, and our staff did a great job of staying together too. It was what they said. The staff did a tremendous job of just continuing to pour in those guys. We never changed who we are, what we did. We continued to stay together and stick to the process of things. You felt like we were heading in the right direction. The results weren't necessarily there at that point, but you felt like it was coming.

I'm happy for them that eventually the results did start showing up for them.

**Q. Kind of off of that, what does it mean to you when you hear the way they talk about what it's like to play for you and how much they care about you as a coach?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, Justin, you know already. No, we got great kids. Yeah, that was the hardest part about that locker room was that -- damn it. It is, it's hard. Every single one of them was emotional in there. Guys that I wouldn't expect to be emotional got emotional in there. It's probably because their coach is emotional.

No, it is hard, and I think that's -- and I told them, at the end of the day you want to be a part of a team and a program that you care enough that you do feel like that, and that's the journey you want to go through because there's other people that don't get to experience that, right?

You want to laugh. You want to cry. You want to have fun. You want to be sad. You want to experience all these emotions, and people don't get to do that. I thought we got to experience all of it.

I mean, you start out 9-2 in the nonconference. Then you go through an absolute rut. You go down to Utah State and get absolutely obliterated. Then you bounce back and go 9-2 down the stretch and eight wins in a row. Undefeated in February.

You want to ride those emotions, and the ups and downs are what make it hard, but it also makes it so rewarding at the end of the day. That's why these guys are so emotional, and that's why they care.

So I'm lucky enough to be with a group of people that I get to experience that with too.

**Q. When we're looking at both last night and tonight, Jojo McIver acted as what felt like a spark plug. How would you describe his performance over these past few games, but also what you're anticipating from him looking forward?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, so impressed with Jojo to do that on this stage. I thought he was a huge spark plug for us both offensively and defensively. I kind of joked with him a little bit. Kobe is his mentor -- not mentor -- his hero. As soon as he puts that headband on, we talked about transforming into Kobe. I thought he did that tonight. He had no fear, he was attacking. In defensively, was an absolute pest. For a freshman to come in and do that in this environment, I'm super excited about his future. I hope he is too.

**Q. Do you feel the kind of ups and downs, the challenges of January, especially kind of taught you more probably both yourself as a coach, but about the team and players to go through everything you guys did with the injuries, the losing, and everything to kind of come out on the other side of that, was maybe a bigger learning experience because of how it went?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, at the time it didn't feel like that, but after coming out of it, yeah. It just showed the character of the group and the character of the coaching staff that we have and everybody around us too. That's not

just the coaching staff. That's Madison, Jason Phillips, our strength coach. That's the administration. Everyone had these guys' back. I never felt like anybody was turning in a different direction.

I think that's the biggest thing is you felt that from the top-down. And it was not fun to go through the 12-10, but after that it was fun to go through that and kind of experience that whole thing. As a first-year coach, too, you don't know what you don't know. I think I got to the point where you got to do what you're good at, and you can't forget what got you -- there's a reason why you got to this point and how do you just pour back into what you're good at too? I think it probably took me until January to realize that I had to get back to doing what I think I'm good at.

**Q. Same question as we had to the players. I know it's obviously raw and fresh, but do you think and hope there will be a chance to continue playing?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Yeah, absolutely. I think the way this team has shown in the last month and a half, two months now, if that postseason opportunity comes our way and NIT presents itself or what not, these guys would love to play, like Jase said.

They are competitors, and the way they responded in there, I think you only get so many chances to play basketball. I think sometimes you lose sight of that. Once it's done, it's done. There's no going back. Any chance you get to compete and play, I don't know why you wouldn't want to do that.

**Q. Years down the line when you look back at your first year as head coach, what do you think will immediately stand out?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Listen to my wife earlier. No, surround yourself with good people. I think that's the biggest thing. Just surround yourself with good people, and you end up -- it usually works out at the end of the day. If you surround yourself with good people that are high-character, that are willing to work and have a positive mindset, that you can figure out a way to get through things.

I'm not talking about the people that just say it's sunny out when it's raining, but when it's raining, they figure out a way to work through that. I think that's the biggest thing is this group found a way to acknowledge it. Like, man, it wasn't right. We weren't in the right spot. How do you adjust? How do you make the right adjustments, and how do you go from there? This team did a great job of making those adjustments.

It was small adjustments. We had to make changes. It wasn't just, like, oh, it's just make more shots all of a sudden. I thought they started buying into each other more. I thought the staff started pouring into them in a different way and finding out more about one another. You got a bunch of new guys. We were still learning about them in the middle of the season. When you bring that many new people into an environment, you're trying to learn about their personalities and what makes them tick. I think that's what changed our season the most.

I thought we really started getting more connected to one another. That's when the basketball can take over from there.

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