

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 13, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**New Mexico Lobos**

**Coach Eric Olen**

**Luke Haupt**

**Tomislav Buljan**

Postgame Press Conference



New Mexico 93, San Jose State 77

THE MODERATOR: We have Luke Haupt and Tomislav Buljan, and Coach Eric Olen. Coach, your thoughts on Ted's game?

ERIC OLEN: I thought our guys played well. Great environment. Appreciate all the fans who came out to support us, so now we just want to get out of here so is we can get some rest, get back tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Tomislav, you outscored them 56 to 24 in the paint tonight. What about the game plan and execution that allowed you and the rest of the team to get good looks inside?**

TOMISLAV BULJAN: I mean, we knew that we can't underestimate this team. They beat Boise. We prepared well. We play like a team. A little bit slow start, but we caught up. We were sharing the ball, playing good defense when it mattered, just being as a collective pushing each other even when things are not going well, and we need to move on.

This is all in the past. Like tomorrow is a new day, new game, so we got to focus. We got to prepare, rest, and play another game.

**Q. Luke, to see Jake do what he does night in and night out, obviously he's been a very good shooter all year, but for him to go 5 for 6 from three, the stakes keep getting higher and higher. How much of a talent is he?**

LUKE HAUPT: He's unbelievable. He's more than just shooter he is a great basketball player all around. We see that every night. Super happy and blessed to have him on our team and not a different one.

**Q. Luke, the change in the starting lineup tonight obviously with Uriyah; was that the main reason you guys were able to sort of contain their two guards a little bit more than in the two regular season games, or was there more to it that you changed up to contain Washington and Colby?**

LUKE HAUPT: I think Uriyah did a great job containing though guards. I think we as a team did a great job having that as a focus. We knew that's how they get going as a team, and so we were locked in on the game plan, and we did a great job kind of having them get off to a slower start.

But, yeah, Uriyah did a great job, and so did the rest of the team.

**Q. Tom, it was only five offensive rebounds, but I got to ask sometimes, are you intentionally missing a couple of those sometimes? There was one that I didn't think it even hit the rim, and you got one of your offensive boards. Kind of Charles Barkley-like. The one you missed, this is really probably more of a question from two games ago or three games ago.**

TOMISLAV BULJAN: I mean, I try to score the ball every time. It's not intentional, but sometimes it happens. I know even when I miss that I can chase the rebound. Like never give up on a play. Sometimes like -- most of the times it turns out good, even second-chance point. Like it hurts the other team and it helps our team, so I'm taking it all the time.

**Q. This is the wrong game to ask about offensive rebounds. My bad. I will ask you about San Diego State tomorrow. Physical game, the rebounding. You were able to do it for three halves of the four halves you played. The first half of the first game was really it, but you had your way for three -- the last three halves against them. Why were you able to find so**



**much success, and do you expect that to continue tomorrow?**

TOMISLAV BULJAN: I mean, it's game by game. Every game is different, and I expect a tough game tomorrow. 100% they're going to prepare different this time. Like they watch this game. They have a little bit more rest than us. I expect a fight tomorrow, but with the fans and their support, I don't think anybody can beat us when we are the right team, when we play together.

So I'm not going to -- it's not going to be only about me. It's about the whole collective and how we're going to prepare for tomorrow's game.

**Q. Luke, the first 14 minutes of this game Colby Garland put his imprint on the game and then final six minutes of the first half you guys seemed to lock in defensively. What changed there?**

LUKE HAUPT: I think part of it was we just wore them down. We were guarding him hard all night. He's a great player, so he's going says to make plays. We knew that coming in. Trying to make everything difficult, and I think that's what we did, and then got a little tired toward the end of that first half.

**Q. And then the second half offensively you guys really exploded. It seemed like fatigue started to set in for them. Did you guys see that, and did that make you press harder in transition?**

LUKE HAUPT: Yeah, I think so. Defensively I think we took it up a step in the second half, and that got us out in transition, and it makes offense a lot easier when you are guarding on the other end.

**Q. Tomislav, you are the only Mountain West player averaging a double-double, 25 points today, 14 rebounds. That's inhumane. Aztecs' Coach said in post presser, he said you would have 72 rebounds tomorrow. But then he said that his team is going to be ready no matter who wins tonight. Do you have a response to that?**

TOMISLAV BULJAN: I mean, I'm just going to do what I got to do to win the game and to help the team. I'm not worried about no comments, like no noise against our team, because we need to focus what we need to do, how we need to execute to win the game.

So I'm not worried about anybody else like saying something. I'm just playing the game. It's simple when you, like, try to give 100% each play what you can give for the team. When you give to the team, the team gives you

back. It goes both ways.

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

**Q. Obviously Antonio is off the bench tonight for the first time this season, but he comes in. Second half is kind of a grind for a while there, and then he comes in, has that 7-0 run off the bench. Just how important was that in the game? How much did it feel like a sigh of relief and maybe even a nail in the coffin?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, he was great in the second half. I thought his activity defensively fueled a lot of the stuff offensively for him. A couple of good drives, hit a big three. Yeah, I thought he played really well specifically in the second half.

**Q. Watching film for this game I'm sure you put an emphasis on the effort and the grit that San Jose State plays, especially since right now they're only playing with six guys. How did you like the way that your team stepped township that challenge?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, we did a nice job. Like you said, they're not playing a lot of guys. They played six. Those three guards played 40 the night before. They played 40 minutes tonight.

We felt like if we just kept playing the game, trying to pressure them, make them work for everything, that eventually there was a good chance they might wear down.

**Q. Eric, can you talk about both ends of the court for Uriyah, but the decision to start, was that primarily a defensive one?**

ERIC OLEN: That was actually Antonio Chol came to me and asked to come off the bench because he felt like it would help our team, help him, so that was his idea. Uriyah did a nice job of adjusting with that and be ready to go, but -- so that was more about Chol's comfort level and trying to help our team.

**Q. I'm sitting here thinking, oh, man, what a great move. They have two small guards that kind of took it to you guys in the regular season. It had nothing to do with -- I mean, I guess he would have got his minutes, though, anyway, right? Uriyah got big minutes in those games in the regular season.**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, we're always going to play that group. I would have to look. There might be a game we didn't early in the year, but every game we played Deyton, Jake, and Uriyah together, so it's just about when they do that.

Yeah, no brilliant coaching move or anything. Not that smart.

**Q. The nine assists and zero turnovers for Uriyah, he hasn't done that all year. I'm curious if there was something about that match-up or something about him starting or just something that kind of explains why he had such an efficient offensive game?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, he played well. I thought he made a lot of plays. Did a nice job of decisions at the end of drives. Dumped it off to Tomislav several times. Uriyah is capable of scoring a ton of points. He's capable of making plays for other people. He had three steals. Had a couple of rebounds.

He impacts the games in a ton of ways that not a lot of guys his size do. He's a really good player.

**Q. I thought the ball movement of both guys moving away from the ball and the ball moving -- with 26 assists on 38 baskets. Can you talk about the way you move the ball and the movement away from the ball tonight?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, I thought the guys did a great job. We talked about that a little bit. We had a couple of high assist games against them in the regular season, but they only gave up five.

I think Boise only had five assists in the game last night, so you know, we feel like our best basketball includes sharing it and moving it and making the right play. I think our guys are just out there trying to make the right play every time.

**Q. A lot of people talk about the first experience in a conference tournament. For most of your guys this was the first time in this atmosphere. Getting one under your belt, now going into the San Diego State game, they brought a lot of people; you brought a lot of people; the environment should be pretty fiery tomorrow. Just having played in this environment once, I know you heard about it, did it live up to it? Does it help going into tomorrow?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, that was big-time. We feel like we're playing a home game out here. Again, appreciate all the fans that came out. That was so loud just starting the game. You could feel that energy.

I thought our guys fed off it as we went, and it was huge for us. Yeah, we got a really good opponent. We're certainly aware of how talented they are. They got great players, great coaches. We certainly have our hands full with that match-up, but I think everybody in the locker room as

competitors are excited about the opportunity.

**Q. Coach, you may have already answered this, but it looked like you guys just wore them down in the second half. Altitude may have kicked in for you guys. They just looked tired. Am I right about that?**

ERIC OLEN: Yeah, I mean, they got multiple guys who basically played 80 minutes in back-to-back nights, so that takes a toll on everybody. We did try to consistently have ball pressure. We always do, but Uriyah and Deyton are really good at the point of attack of really making people work. We tried to play with some pace the other way. I thought in the second half where we strung a few stops and turnovers together to get out and run in transition, and that middle segment where we were getting out and running a little bit that, felt like maybe they hit a little bit of a wall at that point.

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