

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 13, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Utah State Aggies

Coach Jerrod Calhoun

Zach Keller

Karson Templin

Adlan Elamin

Postgame Press Conference

Utah State 79, Nevada 66

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Utah State. We have student-athletes Karson Templin, Zach Keller, Adlan Elamin, Coach Jerrod Calhoun.

Coach, we'll start with you. Get your thoughts on tonight's game.

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, just really proud of our guys. You know, we really struggled from three. We ended up shooting 4 for 19, 21%. But we've said all along with this group, they're special. We have a lot of depth. When our team is really connected defensively, the last two nights we gave up 60, 66 today, we have a chance to be really good.

I thought we got out and ran. We got a lot of efforts from a lot of guys. I thought Addy was really, really good. I thought Zach and Drake, once again, continued to be the unsung heroes. These guys are really intelligent players. They guard. They just do a tremendous job of buying into their role, and it was a team effort tonight.

Steve Alford is a tremendous coach. Tons of respect for Steve and Noodles and those guys. They run great offense. So for us to hold them to 66 and to hold Corey Camper, which I have so much respect for him, to 9 points, that's locking in on the details.

I think our attention to detail and our focus over the last four or five days since we won the regular season has been as good as I've seen.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.



Q. Adlan, not trying to single you out, but three points combined in your last four games. You go for 15 today, led your team. Can you talk about the mindset, what was working for you today?

ADLAN ELAMIN: I just really focused on making defensive plays and rebounding, and I knew the offense would come. So it was really just having trust in my teammates and my teammates having trust in me.

Q. For any one of you guys, can you talk about Drake Allen, who on basically an elbow and a half went for 10 points, 9 rebounds, 4 steals, and 5 assists tonight.

KARSON TEMPLIN: I mean, Drake is a warrior. He always has been. This summer if you came and watched our practices, you would think Drake Allen is LeBron James. But, you know, he just had a kid, so he's got some of that dad strength now. I think the urgency is here for him, and he's getting down to his last few games. So we're going to need him down the stretch.

Q. You know, the guards really helped you out on the boards tonight. It was really all hands on deck if you look at Drake's rebounding numbers, MJ, Mason, and then, of course, that leads to a lot of great outlet passes to you guys as well. Talk about that approach against a good rebounding team to just kind of have all hands on deck.

ZACH KELLER: We've struggled in a couple of games with rebounding, so that's always an emphasis, that we got to finish plays and hold them to one basket. Yeah, I mean, just got to hold them to one basket and be physical.

The bigs, we try and do our job, and the guards do a great job of coming down and rebounding down, because some guards don't crash. They do their job helping us out down there.

Q. I genuinely want to get all three players' take on the connectivity of this group. Karson, maybe starting with you. You guys communicate well. Any time a

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player is knocked down, everybody goes over to help pick him up. Nobody celebrates on an island. It seems like you guys would do anything for each other.

KARSON TEMPLIN: I think it just speaks volumes of our culture. We've been through a lot together. We've worked very hard. Coach pushed us in practices. Any time that culture ever shook in practice or other games, we addressed it. We love each of our teammates, every one of them, so I think that's where it comes from.

ADLAN ELAMIN: You said it perfectly. I would do anything for my guys. And I mean, we've just built that bond over the summer and just everything we've been through through the season, all the highs and the lows. We know what it takes to win this championship, and we want it really bad, so we're laying it all on the line.

Q. Zach, you too. All your fans here, it's just contagious.

ZACH KELLER: They've already said it. That's the culture we grew during the summer and we tried to implement throughout the season. We all love each other. If one of us is down, we're all there to pick them up no matter what's going on.

Q. For Adlan, 28 minutes is the highest you've played since Wyoming in early February. Held Camper Jr. to only nine points. It seemed like you were tasked with being on him. What was kind of the game plan on that to really limit him?

ADLAN ELAMIN: Really just take away his shooting. I mean, he's a really effective player. I wasn't really tasked to guard him, but I just really took it upon myself to make sure I could keep him from scoring as much as I could.

I let him get a couple of open looks, but it was really just a team effort, honestly, just our approach to the game and the scout.

Q. I want to ask a similar question to Zach. This is your season high in minutes, close to your career high in minutes, in a single game. What does it feel like being a crucial piece on the court for not just a few minutes, but for most of the entire game out there?

ZACH KELLER: I mean, no matter how many minutes I play, I'm trying to do what I can for our team to win, whether I play 5 or right here 26. Whatever I can do to make an impact, I'm going to try my best to help our team in any way I can.

Q. Karson, I just wanted to hear about, it's been sort of

just a revolving door with the big men rotation this season, but just talk about how you guys have supported each other through that and really allowed everyone in that rotation to shine.

KARSON TEMPLIN: Me, Garry, and Zach are pretty tight, all three of us. In practice we always want to sub in and out for each other, so I think the same thing comes in the games. When someone has it going, we're going to let them get it going, and we trust them. All three of us have the ability to have a night any night. So I think just the trust with each other and belief.

Q. For any of the three of you, Mason and MJ yesterday combined for 44 points. Tonight only 24. Kind of much more even scoring. What did you guys see on that that maybe they didn't have as much to kind of let you guys get going?

ZACH KELLER: I mean, obviously teams are going to scout. They're obviously our two best scorers, so they're going to scout to try to take them out of the game. That's on the rest of the 13 other guys to try and step up and do what we can to help them out. Obviously we're going to try to do what we can to get them going, because they're a big part of our team to help us get going.

Q. Can you guys talk about the defense on Elijah Price tonight. It seemed like you guys really kept him in check.

ADLAN ELAMIN: Yeah, it was really just the scout. We just took really good attention to the scout. We knew he likes to get to the foul line and be really physical in the paint. We just tried our best to wall up. Any time the guards were on him, they did a good job of getting in front and being physical.

But, yeah, we just tried to stay away from fouling him and just wall up really.

Q. For any of the athletes, at the end of the regular season you had a lot of games you were giving up 80 and a game where you gave up 90. As Coach mentioned, 60 last night, 66 today. What's flipped the script for you guys where you are back to how you were playing defense earlier in the season?

KARSON TEMPLIN: I think it's just attention to detail. It's a long season, so at times you can get lackluster. But last year we had a similar end to our season. You know, we kind of tailed off at the end of the regular season, lost some games.

So I think this year we really wanted to emphasize that

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we're going to get back to what we do, and we're going to make a run in March and keep this momentum going, as Coach says.

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

Q. You mentioned Corey Camper, only 9 points, and then yesterday Gibbs-Lawhorn ended up with 17. Really only 11 points in the first 37-ish minutes. What have you been able to hone in on those guys?

JERROD CALHOUN: Like I said, after the regular season title, we took two off days. We came back on that Tuesday, and we talked about where this team wants to go, right? I think part of our culture is getting our guys' opinions on a lot of things, having good, open communication, and we're very big on the numbers.

We had been giving up 85 points a game our last five games. That's a recipe for disaster. So I think part of the reason we have such great relationships with our kids is we can show them numbers, we can back it up with the film, and we have great buy-in.

Obviously if we're going to keep this thing going and win a conference championship and make a run in March, they've gotten the message that we're going to win it with our defense.

So I think attention to detail, understanding whether it's Camper, which I think he's -- I think Steve did as good a job as anybody getting him and Price. Those are two big big-time players, and those guys really fit Coach's style. They played well together. Those guys were a great one-two punch. So we wanted to really focus on those two guys.

Q. Adlan played 28 minutes, really had a solid game. You had kind of mentioned earlier that you really needed him to step up rebounding and defensively, and that's kind of what got him going tonight. What did you see from him?

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, he's just a young kid. I mean, he didn't even start on his high school team, right? He's just figuring this thing out. The sky is the limit for him. He's about a buck 85, buck 90. When he gets to 210, he doesn't get bumped off his spots.

He's going to be an incredible player. He's got a lot of good instincts, extremely big-time athlete. His length is very underrated. He can make up for plays, and he's still learning.

You know, he wasn't supposed to take the ball out. He's done that three times now when we're trying to break a press. He's taking the ball out. Mason is on top of him. Mason is yelling at him. I'm yelling at him. He's just learning. He's just a young kid.

Q. Similar question to the first one, but kind of different. When all the cylinders top to bottom on this roster are firing like they did today, just how high is the ceiling for this team?

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, I don't think they're all firing, to be honest with you. I thought we had a lot of guys off the bench that can play better. So I don't know how many times you've seen us, but we can play a heck of a lot better. We played great defense, but offensively we missed a lot of reads. We didn't make threes.

So we didn't play our best today. We got more in the tank.

Q. Looking at some of the games down the stretch, the regular season on defense, some of the weaknesses were allowing teams into the paint. They kind of would find whatever shot they want, but it seems like your interior defense is now the strength of the defense. How do you flip the script so well?

JERROD CALHOUN: Just showing the film, Jason, really stressing it, and it's a want-to. It's a buy-in, right? There has to be a want to win the fight. You know, you got to fight in the paint. That's a toughness thing.

Second-chance points, pushing Elijah off the block, trying to make it hard on him. He's a good player. To hold him to six and Camper to nine, that's pretty impressive. I thought our physicality and winning the fight tonight was really good.

Q. What were you seeing from Zach Keller where you kept him on the court for 27 minutes?

JERROD CALHOUN: You know, somebody made the point with our forwards, we just do it by committee. Our whole culture, Jason, I think you know this, is "we over me," sacrificing for the team. We really try to evaluate that on the front end, so when we bring them into our program, we don't have problems on the back end, right?

Everybody talks about the guys you miss in the portal, but the most important guys are the guys you have daily. I think it's a special group.

I told these guys in the locker room, you got a chance to win the regular season and a conference championship. When you get old like us coaches, you realize this is very

difficult. It's a lot of work. It's a lot of time, and it's a lot of buy-in with a lot of people. You got to get everybody moving in the right direction.

I think we're playing great basketball right now.

Q. Just talk a little bit about, you mentioned MJ and Mason had such big games yesterday. Today just so balanced. What does that say about your team?

JERROD CALHOUN: I honestly thought Collins had a great game. He really read the game. He was coming off those wide pin-downs, getting two feet in the paint, getting his teammates involved. Second leading rebounder today.

MJ, it's a shame. I wish I had him for longer. He's just such a wonderful kid. He wants to do right, and he's a scorer. So for him to make the right plays tonight and get Zach and those guys involved, Addy, and get 7 rebounds, that's a good, complete game.

Q. I know you're not on social media, but there's a lot of noise about you out there again. How do you keep these guys --

JERROD CALHOUN: We don't even talk about it. I thought Bryson Barnes, our quarterback, had an unbelievable speech today. So you know every game I have somebody that's connected to our program, whether it's Sam, Nini. Today was Bryson Barnes. Bryson Barnes had a great message. Really for our seniors, but for the entire group.

Really what we talk about every day is being present. We are focused on winning a conference championship. We're not plugging into social media. We're not worried about the portal. We are worried about whoever we play tomorrow at 3:00. I think you have to live life like that, right?

You don't have a season like this, and for us to sit around and speculate and talk about what other people are talking about, we're not focused on that.

Q. 22 turnovers tonight. How do you clean that up a little bit?

JERROD CALHOUN: We had 11, so...

Q. I saw something. Okay. My apologies.

JERROD CALHOUN: You're good, you're good. I mess up a lot, trust me.

Q. You had a couple of instances where you struggled getting the ball inbound.

JERROD CALHOUN: Yeah, we were sloppy. I thought Steve cranked it up there. Those kids were playing desperate. They were playing hard. It's hard to practice that in those pressure settings. Like our free-throws, 65%, not good enough. Those late turnovers late. We got to get the ball to Mason and Drake, and we got to provide better space and outlets.

Usually passing more than dribbling. But those are good, valid points.

Q. Quick follow-up. Going into tomorrow is the championship, you're trying to win a banner tomorrow. How do you instill that tomorrow is to win a championship?

JERROD CALHOUN: The players need to sleep, and the coaches need to work. We got to do a really quick turnaround. 3:00 is going to be difficult, but you're playing it through your concepts. You got to create space on offense.

We've just played New Mexico and San Diego State. So a lot of these teams, we all know each other. Who can win with their identity, right? New Mexico has an identity. Steve's team had an identity. Dutch's team has an identity. We have an identity. Whoever plays to their strengths will probably win this game. Whoever plays more desperate, more connected, and makes big plays is going to win the game.

But I think the crowds here have been incredible. You know, all these games have been packed, and I think it just speaks volumes for the Mountain West. It's bittersweet. This league, I can remember staying up late as a youngster watching these games back home at 10:00, 11:00, and we're in it now.

To have a chance to win another title and be a part of this league, it's pretty awesome, and it's kind of bittersweet for the Aggies. I think everybody knows this is our last chance in this conference to win a tournament.

You see who's got the most fans. They're probably driving right now from Logan, Utah, and we're bringing reinforcements, I'm sure.

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