

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

San Diego State Aztecs

Coach Brian Dutcher

Reese Dixon-Waters

Miles Byrd

Postgame Press Conference



Utah State 73, San Diego State 62

BRIAN DUTCHER: First of all, congratulations to Coach Calhoun and Utah State, their coaching staff. Regular season champs and postseason champs, that's hard to do. But they did it. They did it with great efficiency. We knew the whole game was going to be decided in the paint, and they got in the paint more than we did.

They lived in the paint, made plays from the paint, and then made timely jump shots.

Obviously the critical play of the game was the five-point play in a four-point game, and that was really a huge momentum turner, took the lead from four to nine in one possession. Then they just kind of held on to it from that point on.

But a hard-fought game, and it's basketball. We're disappointed. We wanted to win in the worst way and put ourselves in a position to do that, and then obviously Utah State did a great job defensively and really limited our opportunities at the offensive end.

Q. Coach just talked about that five-point swing late on to put it almost out of reach for you guys. Can you talk about what happened in that stretch and maybe how that led to what happened?

REESE DIXON-WATERS: I lost MJ Collins going on the baseline and just happened to run into a screener, tried to cheat it, something I shouldn't have done, and whatever happened happened.

Q. Reese, everything was working for you it seemed like offensively, scored 20 points tonight. What was

working for you?

REESE DIXON-WATERS: Just letting the game come to me and just trying to lock in on the defensive end. Something that I've been trying to work on, not being so caught up in what could happen in the future and just being present in the moment.

Q. Miles, you started the game with a steal and a score. I think the rest of the game you guys went 39 and a half minutes without a steal. What made it so hard for you to guys to force mistakes?

MILES BYRD: They were doing a good job cutting us. Obviously we like to play in the passing lane, especially me. Yeah, right after I got that steal, I think I got back cut twice in a row. So definitely made me adjust to how I was going to guard going forward.

I feel like I'm one of the guys on the team that does a good job getting steals and getting deflections and stuff, and I think they just -- that was probably their main focus coming into tonight was taking care of the ball. They did a good job of doing that; six turnovers in a 40-minute game is a recipe to win, honestly.

Q. For either player, your team obviously is known for making offenses uncomfortable based on your defense. What got you guys out of rhythm normally on the defensive side?

MILES BYRD: I mean, you don't want to blame fatigue, but I think we got back to our hotel at 12:30 last night, three games in a row. Obviously they just looked like the more fresh team in the second half. When it came to winning time, they made more plays, got to the paint, dropped off to the big, dunks, lay-ups, offensive rebounds. They just made more winning plays than we did.

Q. You guys had a heck of a week here in Las Vegas. As the bubble team coming in, do you guys think you did enough to make the Big Dance?

MILES BYRD: Leave that up to the committee. Hopefully.

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Q. There were question marks heading into the season regarding how this group of players lacked experience playing with previous seasons transfers coming in, freshmen coming in. How proud are you of this group?

REESE DIXON-WATERS: I'm very proud of this group. We've had ups and downs, but I think we've grown throughout the season. Proud of all the younger guys that came in and helped in times when they needed to, and they grew as well. So I'm very proud of everybody.

MILES BYRD: Coming in preseason No. 1 unanimously, I think first time in Mountain West history, something like that. We had a lot of rough patches throughout the year. I love everybody in that locker room. I'm proud of how we blocked out outside noise throughout the year, continued to put our heads down, continued to work.

I felt like the past few days have been our best playing basketball together. It sucks that it was 30 games into the year, but yeah, if we're given the opportunity again, I think we've still got a lot left in us.

Q. Do you want to keep playing if you don't go to the NCAA Tournament, or is this program of such stature that it's NCAA or nothing?

MILES BYRD: Yeah, I mean, as players I don't think we've really got much say in that. Obviously been an Aztec for four years, been to the tournament three years in a row, so obviously we're hoping to hear our names tomorrow. If that doesn't happen, we'll probably meet as a team and figure out what the next step is. But we're focused on hopefully hearing our names tomorrow.

REESE DIXON-WATERS: I'm with whatever. I love playing. Hopefully we get our name called tomorrow. And then, like he said, we'll meet as a team.

Q. Dutch, I'll let you campaign for your spot to the NCAA Selection Committee.

BRIAN DUTCHER: Mountain West was undervalued this year. Seven teams with 20-plus wins, so the parity -- I've said it all year, the parity has hurt our league this year. That's what every league wants is parity. So if you're in a Power Four, the parity is fantastic. Get 18, 19 teams in. But in the Mountain West, parity is not a good thing. There wasn't enough separation between the top.

We had a good year. We finished alone in second place. We made the conference championship game. I think we went 9-9 or 9-10 in Quad 1 and 2 games, and we've got a

good team. It's the same thing, though. The thing we all know, not being in the Power Four, is the opportunities are shrinking, they're not growing.

So when people say, well, it's a soft bubble and we don't need to expand the field, we don't need to expand the field if we're taking mediocre Power Four teams. There are good mid-major teams that would play well in March that would love to go.

When they say the bubble is soft, it might be soft with Power Fours, but it's not soft with mid-majors. There are a lot of good mid-major teams, and we are one of them.

Q. The largest lead of the game was six points up until that final stretch. Can you talk about the back-and-forth nature of the game and how every possession was crucial?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Both teams were getting tired. They took a time-out. I thought both teams looked really fatigued, and then they got the five-point play, and that was the separation that was needed.

That created enough separation where we weren't scoring at a high level, and nine points might as well have been 18 at that point. It was tough to find our way back. I tried to get Magoon a couple to threes to cut into it right away because I think he had the best opportunity of getting open threes.

So we tried a few things to get ourselves back in it, but fatigue was definitely a factor. For both teams. But once they got the lead and started going, then it opened up. And like I said, the game was decided in the paint. They got in the paint way more than we did, and they capitalized every time they got there.

Q. I know the game just ended, but last night you guys probably didn't get to your hotel until close to 1:00 in the morning. How much do you think that affected the team today? Because obviously it's an advantage to play in that first game yesterday.

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, I've been on both ends of it, where we've had the early game and someone who had the later game beat us, and I've been at the other end where we've had a later game and won it. I've been in this game eight times in nine years, so it's a challenge no matter where you come from.

The team -- I think the one year New Mexico won it, they played four games to get there. That was incredible.

But this was hard. This was the hardest thing, I think, that



we ask any college team to do is to finish your game last night at 11:30 and play the next day at 3:00. Any extra rest would have been valued for either team.

But it is what it is. We're not making the decisions. TV is picking the times when we're going to play. So hopefully as we move into the Pac-12, we'll have better opportunities to play on more rest at better game times. But we're not picking that, and the conference isn't picking that. The TV networks are picking when we play.

Q. You just mentioned the Pac-12 next year. All these years in the Mountain West Conference tournament, eight of nine for you and before that all those years with Fisher. I know it's going to be a little bit before you start reflecting on that, but tomorrow there's a decision to be made whether you guys -- where you guys go, if you go. Reflecting on the Mountain West and all your time in it.

BRIAN DUTCHER: Mountain West has been great for us. Mountain West has been good for San Diego State but San Diego State has been good for the Mountain West. We built the brand. They'll be making money off our tournament appearances for some time to come. Unfortunately we're not taking that with us. I'd like to take that money with us. But we've been a great representative of the Mountain West. Obviously played in multiple NCAA tournaments, making it to the National Championship game, raised the profile of this conference.

I think based on how we played for a long time, I always say, a lot of these teams in the conference are looking a lot more like San Diego State than not San Diego State, bigger, physical, good defensive teams, play the right way, play hard. There's a lot of really good coaches in this league.

So I'd like to think we were a part of that because the team that's winning the conference you've got to find a way to play with them and beat them, and sometimes you have to play like them to do that. So I think we've changed the profile of the league to a degree, also.

Q. How proud are you of this group that entering the season hasn't played much basketball together prior to the season?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, I mean, it's the new era. Some of these teams are running an entire new team. The problem for the Mountain West is all these teams that have won 20 games, it took them a month or so to get these teams together and playing well. So they lost early-season games, and that's where the conference couldn't build the resume it needed.

I'd argue any of these teams in this league are playing as well as anyone in the country right now. Seven teams with 20-plus victories. This is a really good basketball conference.

So unfortunately, there are too many good teams in the league, and it's going to probably affect us on Selection Sunday.

The most we're going to get is two, and that's if they take us as an at large, and this is a team that's had as many as five or six teams taken into the tournament. So fingers crossed, we have a good resume. We've been on the bubble, and hopefully we've done enough where maybe we'll have an outside chance to still get in. To talk about any other tournament other than that would be counterproductive right now.

Q. What happened with Miles Heide last night, and was there any chance he could play, or do you know if it's broken?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I think it's broken, and with that being said, we had a guy named Chase Tapley a number of years that played with a broken hand in the NCAA Tournament. So Miles is taped up, and I'm sure he'll need to be cast at some point. But we'll wait and see what happens.

We miss Miles, we miss Elzie down the stretch. Our depth was good yesterday, put 36 points off the bench. I don't know what we got off the bench today, but being shorthanded definitely hurt us in a game where you're playing three games in three days.

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