

# Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**Air Force Falcons**

**Coach Stacy McIntyre**

**Milahnne Perry**

**Madison Smith**

Postgame Press Conference

Air Force - 66, Utah State - 59

STACY MCINTYRE: All positive. We've had a couple of tough games down the stretch with San Diego State, Boise State, and games like New Mexico prepare you for wins like this.

**Q. You guys aren't favored in these situations very often. How hard was that to put a team away when you were kind of supposed to?**

MADISON SMITH: It's really hard to beat a team three times, and we've shown that a little bit in the last tournaments that me and Milahnne have been a part of. But I think we just really needed to lock in. We were able to do that. We're pretty excited to move on to the next round.

**Q. Milahnne, first season, it was kind of up and down for you at times. How nice was it on this stage when it matters so much to be the you that we've seen so often?**

MILAHNIE PERRY: It's very nice. It was a struggle during the season, but I just didn't let that affect my confidence or my confidence in the team, and it was really nice.

**Q. Madison, you mentioned beating a team three times. Now tomorrow the situation will be reversed. How do you use that to your advantage?**

MADISON SMITH: I think we're really excited. We've played Wyoming a lot. We've seen their habits and everything. We were in the game both times. I think everyone on our team knows it's a winnable game. We've just got to go out and execute the game plan.



MILAHNIE PERRY: I completely agree. I think losing twice to them makes us really hungry. We're not going to let it be a third time, especially in a situation like this. We don't want to go home and we're very hungry.

**Q. When you go to the line with 21 seconds left in a three-point game what goes through your head in a tournament setting like this?**

MILAHNIE PERRY: Usually nothing, but this game, I was very nervous. I tried to sing to myself in my head when I'm at the free-throw line.

**Q. Sing?**

MILAHNIE PERRY: Yeah. I was trying to do that, calm myself down.

**Q. What song do you sing?**

MILAHNIE PERRY: Just any song. I think today it was something by Beyoncé.

**Q. What was working well for you guys when things were going well to create number advantages to let you guys make decisions and kind of get things going?**

MADISON SMITH: Milahnne Perry getting to the basket.

MILAHNIE PERRY: I think Maddie Smith's defense and rebounding, along with everyone else's defense, focus and everyone's just heart.

**Q. How do you capitalize on some of those mistakes that Utah State committed down the stretch?**

MADISON SMITH: I think their press was something we capitalized down a lot down the stretch. We were able to get a lot of easy buckets off their press.

Our coaches did a great job emphasizing that this week in practice. So we kind of knew what to do, and I think it



ended up in five or six wide-open layups down the stretch that kind of put us ahead and were able to keep us in the lead.

**Q. You guys just scored your 18th win of the season. I believe that ties the program record for wins going all the way back to the 1990s, the early 1990s. Wonder what it means to the two of you to be such a big part of this program turnaround for the Air Force Academy?**

MADISON SMITH: Means the world to me especially my senior year. This team has a big part of my heart. My freshman-year team was the same way a bunch of girls that worked hard and wanted to get wins for the program and for the school so we get the recognition that we felt we deserved. I'm really happy that we were able to represent the Air Force Academy well this year.

**Q. Madison, I think you said a moment ago that it's hard to beat a team three times in the same season. Now you're turning the tables because Wyoming is going to have to do that tomorrow to you. Can you use that for motivation for tomorrow's game?**

MADISON SMITH: Yes, sir, for sure. Our team is a very hungry team. We're very eager to kind of, I don't know, work the chip on our shoulder a little bit. So we have a lot of motivation going into Wyoming. And obviously they're close to us, so there's that little bit that adds more motivation. We're excited.

**Q. You guys are not a big team. I'm not sure if maybe you have one 6-footer on the roster. This team you played today is a bigger team. Most of the teams you're going to play are bigger. You held your own on the boards today. And I've seen you guys do that all year long. What's the secret to holding your own on the boards against a bigger opponent?**

MILAHNIE PERRY: Jayda McNabb. I think we really emphasized rebounding especially because we're a small team. Jayda really does work down there. She puts in so much work, and that really makes a difference. And just everyone, I feel, today made a collective effort to do so as well.

**Q. Madison, piling on what he said about tying the record for wins, you also on this day, First-Team All-Mountain West, All-Mountain West All-Defensive Team and then you get a win here. Can you encapsulate what this day has been like for you?**

MADISON SMITH: It's been extremely rewarding. I'm just happy that I'm able to help the team in whichever way I can. Tonight it was on the boards and a little bit of

defense. We're just really excited that Air Force players got the recognition that they deserved this year.

**Q. First time in this chair for you. What goes through your head when the lead starts to get down around five points, three points, late? How is that from this perspective?**

STACY MCINTYRE: It's nerve-racking, to say the least. And I think, like I said earlier, those games down the stretch that we had in the season that were close prepared us for a win like this.

I think the biggest difference in this team is not just that we want to come out and compete, but that we expect to win.

**Q. Obviously the record -- I would assume you think the record doesn't indicate what Utah State is like as a team. How are they so much better than 4-27 or whatever it shows?**

STACY MCINTYRE: We said it to the team earlier. That is one of the best four-win teams that anybody will face this late in the season.

The best thing about this team is just their approach this week and not taking a team like Utah State lightly. Regardless of the fact that we've beat them at our place and also in Logan, Utah, and we came with a focus that we needed to get a win.

**Q. For Jayda to start scoring, scored the first seven points, obviously that's not generally her role, but to get you guys that little cushion early, how important was that?**

STACY MCINTYRE: I mean, Jayda, she can really ignite her team. Clearly, primarily, she does that on the defensive end and on the defensive boards, but anytime she's making layups and every time she steps back and shoots a 3, I'm just keeping my fingers crossed.

But I think the time that we put in, extra time we put in in practice shooting has made a difference, especially for Jayda.

**Q. There were a few times early in the second half your defense seemed like it was going to get things going. And then your offense at the end of the third quarter looked like it was going to start a run. How was Utah State able to counter right when you guys looked like you might have that finishing kick?**

STACY MCINTYRE: Anytime you come down the floor and you have a couple of misses, they get down in



transition, we know that Utah State runs both on a make and miss. And our priority was just to keep them in front, to push up on their shooters, make sure we stay high and just not foul those 3s.

That young lady at the end, No. 10, she hit a big 3 and we were in her face. But just continuing to reiterate every single dead ball, every timeout what we needed to do. And they executed down the stretch.

**Q. When you look back at the Wyoming games, seemed like there was a dry spell that was kind of the difference in both of them. Is that how you saw it? How do you combat that?**

STACY MCINTYRE: Well, that can happen against Wyoming. And especially when it's tough to -- when you play at Wyoming, probably one of the more difficult places. I think they've proven to play in the Mountain West Conference and we just have to get out to a good start.

Just like we didn't take Utah State lightly, we're going into a Wyoming game having not beat them this year. So just gives us that much more motivation.

**Q. How do you approach Allyson Fertig?**

STACY MCINTYRE: You definitely want to stay in front of her. We've tried to adjust how we've defended her. I mean, she's clearly going to get touches, but we have to make sure we make it as difficult as possible for her to catch and then to cover up those great perimeter shooters.

**Q. Two double-doubles tonight, three players in double digits. What impressed you the most about how you were able to spread it around, get opportunities basically everywhere?**

STACY MCINTYRE: Anytime -- Maddie Smith, she had somebody just face guarding her most of the night. And I told her after the game just how proud I was of her just to stay in the game and stay the course.

I mean, anytime you get two players with double-doubles -- we often get that from Jayda -- but just Milahnie Perry down the stretch. And the last couple of games, I mean, she can win a game for you. And I've often told her when the game's on the line or when the ball's in her hand not to doubt herself, and she didn't do that tonight, she was fantastic.

**Q. I'd like to come back to what I mentioned before, 18-win season and counting so far. Your first year with the program, what has it meant to you to be a part of that and what's been the secret to your success this**

**season?**

STACY MCINTYRE: Well, we've definitely taken just one game at a time. Coming out of the preseason and into a very tough conference and dropping games early and just keeping this team motivated. And after we've gotten that win number one, win number two, we just kept building that momentum. And we've peaked at the right time.

I'm definitely not just proud of our seniors, because I mean seniors bring you to this point. I know Jo Huntimer didn't have her typical 11 assists tonight, but, I mean, she's a big part of why we've gotten to this point with 18 wins.

Definitely happy not just for these seniors but for this team and for this program. And we just want to continue building a winning culture.

**Q. How big a part of building that culture is Milahnie Perry? I know you were just talking about her a minute ago, but what makes her so good?**

STACY MCINTYRE: I mean, that young lady -- Milahnie, she's just down the stretch. She doesn't doubt herself. She knows that her coaching staff and her team has confidence in her.

And I think any time a player like that has the ability to take over a game when we need her to without doubting -- and she's just good. I'm always thankful she's on our team.

**Q. Looking ahead to tomorrow again, both of the games you played against Wyoming so far this year have been somewhat similar. I mean, the scores have been pretty much similar. They've been in the low 60s. You've been in the low 50s. What's it going to take to break that mold?**

STACY MCINTYRE: Well, we've got to hit some shots. I mean, anytime you play a team like Wyoming and you keep them in the low 60s, all you've got to do is be in those high 60s.

Like you said earlier, both of those games have been in those low 50s for us. So we've got to have some people step up, make some shots and get to the free-throw line like we did. We know that defensively it is a different look for us.

They do have size and stay inside that 3-point line. And hopefully also we can score some points off our defense.

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