

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

San Diego State Aztecs

Stacie Terry-Hutson

Naomi Panganiban

Natalie Martinez

Kaelyn Hamilton

Veronica Sheffey

Postgame Press Conference

San Diego State - 71, UNLV - 59

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Just really proud of our girls. We came in with a game plan, and I thought they executed it really, really well.

UNLV is a really good team and have dominated the Mountain West for so long. They demand respect. Coach La Rocque does a great job with that group. We knew it was going to take an all-out effort. Just proud of our kids being able to overcome adversity.

We started really strong, and then that trap hurt us a little bit, but we got to the free-throw line and was able to knock down shots and seal the game. Really proud of us.

I'll say this again -- I said it last time I was here -- every night somebody has been stepping up for us. It's been our superpower. We're very deep. We have a lot of people that can shoot the ball and contribute in other ways. That is a good reason why we've been able to do what we've been able to do this year. Just proud of us.

Q. Naomi, as a freshman this is the biggest game you've played in. You scored 14 points, got a few boards. How did you approach this game and how did you find success?

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: Honestly we came in taking everything personally. I came in with a mindset go at everybody, doesn't matter. Same intensity. And I think our defense really helped with our offense.



Q. Nat, you guys have become the first team since 2021 to beat UNLV twice in the season. How do you approach playing against this team in particular?

NATALIE MARTINEZ: We take it as every team we approach. We stick to our principles. We stick to what the coaches are telling us in scout, and we just play as a team.

Q. What about this team is built for these moments?

KAELYN HAMILTON: We just take each game the same. We approach each game with the same mentality. And we know that what we've done behind closed doors, we know who we are. And that sets us up every game.

Q. Veronica, gets kind of nervy in the fourth quarter, especially late. They cut it to seven. How do you finish it off?

VERONICA SHEFFEY: Just keeping the same mindset. We knew they would come out more aggressive in the second half, so just being prepared for that. And just staying poised and knowing that, like Kaelyn said, trusting our preparation for the game and knowing we're all on the same page and just finishing off strong.

Q. How much do you look forward to a shot at the conference title?

KAELYN HAMILTON: We're really excited.

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: Totally. I mean, I think it's what we worked for all season. We came out with a lot of intensity in this game and to carry the momentum to the next game. The job's not finished.

Q. For all the players, you beat them once earlier in the regular season. I'm wondering how important that was to giving you belief that you could come in on their home court here and win tonight?

VERONICA SHEFFEY: I think it definitely helps our mentality knowing that. But we proved ourselves even in



our non-conference schedule. So knowing that and proving that, what we could do, I think, carries us into our conference and just throughout the whole season, keeping that same mentality.

And not just because like they might be the top team in the conference doesn't mean anything. Like, they're a great team, but we know what we've done has prepared us for these kind of games like this.

Q. You guys had a really nice loud, boisterous cheering section here tonight. I'm wondering how much that helped you rise to the occasion.

NATALIE MARTINEZ: Having fans behind us it's incredible. We hear them every single time. When we win, we look at them. We appreciate everyone who comes, even if they're not supporting like a daughter or cousin. Just fans in general, we appreciate all of that.

Q. You held them to under 30 percent shooting on the night. What do you attribute that to? Looked like you were making everything hard for them?

VERONICA SHEFFEY: It comes down to, one of our coaches talked about focus. That's been one of our words we've had the past couple of weeks, just staying locked in. I think knowing our match-ups, knowing our personnel and just staying locked in until the very end, I think that was the biggest thing that contributed to holding them to 30 percent.

Q. You hold UNLV without a point for the final 3:40 of the first half. After last night, almost seven minutes out of halftime. Just talk about what it takes to have that lock-in to have those long shutout streaks. And how does that help you build?

NAOMI PANGANIBAN: Our coaches talk about it that, that our defense creates our offense. Just locking in with the same intensity on defense. And sticking to the scout and the game plan really helped us get going on offense. I think that really helped.

Q. Kaelyn, you've seen your role grow over the season. Talk about the attitude you bring in when you're asked to be the defensive stopper/bulldog that helps the team build and get things going for the other way?

KAELYN HAMILTON: I just try and be a spark off the bench and bring the same energy, whether I know I'm getting ready to go in or I don't know. I'm like always ready. But, yeah, I just try to be a spark off the bench and bring some energy to the game that maybe wasn't there

before. It was there and just keep it going.

Q. Roni, you played the second half with foul trouble. You picked up your third right out of halftime and you pick up the fourth, 7:20 to go in the fourth quarter. Talk about how you were able to navigate that and play such an important role down the stretch.

VERONICA SHEFFEY: I just think getting a feel for how the refs are calling the game -- unfortunately got some early. Just knowing that they're going to call them. Just playing smart and not gambling anything like that. But just kind of staying locked in and knowing the feel of the game.

Q. You mentioned the superpower that you guys have. Maybe it's that or something else that makes you built for these moments in the tournament?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: I have a confident group behind me. We practice well. We were prepared. I thought our coaching staff did a great job preparing them. But I have a very confident group. And our competitive spirit is very high.

So I thought that -- we were looking at ESPN and I think they had a 91.3 percent chance for us to lose. I guess the other way around 8.7, if my math is right. So we just took that personal.

We feel like we're a good team. We know UNLV is very good and they deserve all the respect. But we're a good team too. And I thought we were trying to show everybody that we were.

Q. Can you talk about Kim's toughness to come back from kind of a bloody finger I thought it was in the first quarter? She comes back in the second quarter, gets a couple of big ones and then kind of really kick starts that 15-3 run?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: And had a bloody nose. It was a physical game. She was bleeding from a lot of extremities there.

But she's just tough. I mean, that's just who she is. She's a competitor. She does a lot of things for us. We ask her to do a lot. And that just showed she's just tough. She's just tough.

Q. That moment in the third, a 7-0 run in 39 seconds, jump-started by Adryana with a 3 and a steal and a block to get a couple of transition buckets. How did that impact your confidence?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: We talked a lot about before



the game last time we played UNLV here I thought we played a decent game. We ended up losing by 10. But Kim and Roni were the only ones in double figures.

If you look at the stat sheet tonight, we have five people in double figures. John can correct me, but we're something like 19-2 or something crazy when we share the ball.

We had 18 assists. We had five people in double figures. We're just a better team when the scoring is disbursed a little bit.

Your question about AD. I know where she wants to get it. She loves that shot on the elbow. People keep giving it to her. I'm not sure why. But she's able to take it.

She's worked really hard on her game. But we know that she can score at all three levels. She hit a big layup, too, at the end when we needed a bucket.

Q. What's the message at halftime after you get out to that lead?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: We were proud of our defense. We only gave up 20 points. We talked about how good UNLV was and there was going to be a run and we needed to stay poised when they did make their run.

And we lost a little bit of it. But thank goodness we had a little bit of a cushion. But again we had a lot of freshmen on the floor, too. This is a great training ground for them to get better and better. The future's bright for us, for sure.

Q. That 20-point lead near the end of the third, how do you not allow your team to be comfortable or complacent in it?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Like I said, they're a competitive team. That wasn't enough. We were just trying to limit our mistakes and make great plays on the offensive end. So continuing to coach.

What I'm most proud about, you'll see, if you pay attention to our huddles, we have people in the huddle continuing to coach, too, and echoing our message. We had a lot of buy-in, I think that helped.

Q. You talked about how you had five players in double figures tonight. That seems to be the personality of your team. I think season-wide you've had maybe four players in average double figures, but no one seems to be the big dominant star. I think your leading scorer is at 10.8 per game. Can you just talk a little bit about that ball-sharing personality, and the idea that this is not a team that necessarily relies on

one big star player?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: That's part of the recruiting pitch when we bring kids in. We want to play this way all the time. We want to have people on the floor that can score, and we don't need one kid to shoot the ball 30 times. I think we're at our best when we share. And we're a hard team to defend.

I just think we play better that way. Some other teams have success the other way where you have someone scoring 30.

Where it hurts us is in the all-conference voting because we don't have a lot of kids on the team. But it's not about that. It's not about the accolades. It's about the team concept.

And, again, our goal was to win a championship, and that's what we came to do. We're not done. The job's not done, like Naomi said. But we care more about the team goals than the individual statistics.

Q. I did want to ask you about that very thing you brought up, because I wouldn't say you were left out of the conference honors, but, I mean, for a team that's going to be playing for the championship tomorrow, maybe not as much as some of the other teams that are here. I'm wondering, was a chip on your shoulder for your team coming in?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: I think so. I think so. But we also talked about; it's not about that. Would you rather have an all-conference honor or a piece of the net? We decided we prefer the net.

Q. You guys did an amazing job on Kimpson tonight. Speaking of a team that has a big scorer, they do. And she didn't. You held her to 10 points tonight. She barely touched the ball in the first quarter. And even the 10 points came on, I think, 12 shots. So can you talk about what you did to contain her?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Let me say, let me give her flowers, because she is such a good player. She's the engine that makes them go.

She can do so many things. And I thought she kept them -- she hit some big shots in the first half. She struggled last night a little bit. And maybe struggled a little bit today. But what she's been able to do in a Rebel uniform and how she has -- I admire the composure she has throughout the game. She never gets too up or too down. I think she's a great player.

We just tried to make it a little more challenging for her, but UNLV missed some shots they normally make. But I don't know that it was anything we did. I just want to give her flowers because she's been really good to this conference. And UNLV's done a great job with her. It's been fun to watch her grow.

Q. You mentioned some of the issues with the press in that fourth quarter. What did you see during the timeouts that saw that Kim was going to be able to make those length-of-the-court passes to get the two layups that really helped keep UNLV at arm's reach?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: We just tried to take advantage of their aggressiveness. That point of the game, they had to be a little bit more aggressive to get back into the game. So we just tried to play for the long ball, just to loosen it up a little bit. It bothered us when we were trying to run our normal press break. That gave us two buckets, five points, that gave us a little bit of a cushion back.

But just our staff getting together and realizing what we needed to do and I thought we executed it really well.

Q. The team has said the focus is winning the conference championship. Dating back to the start of the season, just how have you seen the team grow, and where have you seen the biggest growth to get to the point now where you have the opportunity to make that goal a reality tomorrow?

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: Yeah, we've had a really good season. I think we're -- what are we? 24 wins? We've had a good season. But I would season say there's some peaks and valleys in there. I think we lost some games I don't think we should have. But playing with a lot of new people. We have four freshmen that contribute quite a bit. We have two transfers that have come to our program in addition to the kids that stayed. So us just trying to kind of finding our way. I think we've been playing really good basketball as of late and we used that momentum to come into the tournament.

Again, this was a great win. Again, much respect to UNLV, but we still have another game to play. So what I need to make sure I prepare my kids for is that this isn't the end. This is not what we came for. We have to make sure that we're prepared for tomorrow because either of those teams are going to come out and fight.

Q. You're so respectful to this conference and to your opponents, and I know the NCAA people aren't going to listen to this question. But I think it's absurd that a team as good as UNLV will probably not even get a

thought to go as an at-large team. For everything -- they've done 60 games in a row practically, and tonight's your night, but I feel like you want to respect them a little. And I don't know why they can't get any love from around the country.

STACIE TERRY-HUTSON: I would say this. The Mountain West is a good league. There's a lot of teams in here that deserve some recognition. I agree with you, UNLV deserves to be in the NCAA Tournament. And I hope that we're wrong because Lindy's done everything she can. She has strengthened their schedule. They've gone out and played some really tough teams. They beat some good teams. They dominated this league.

So I think they deserve to be in the NCAA. So I hope they're listening to us because you and I would vote for them for sure.

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