

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Wyoming Cowgirls

Coach Heather Ezell

Ola Ustowska

Emily Mellema

Allyson Fertig

Postgame Press Conference

Wyoming - 57, Fresno State - 45

HEATHER EZELL: First off, what a fight Fresno gave us. I thought they really bothered us in the first half with their aggressiveness and their zone, but we were able to settle in, a lot like last night, and be able to make shots in the second half when we needed them. And we were able to put it away. Happy with the way my team performed.

Q. Ola, you'd yet to hit multiple 3s against a conference opponent. Tonight you hit three of them. How good does that feel in a win like this?

OLA USTOWSKA: I just trust my teammates and I trust that they believe in me. And I felt today really good in the warmups. Right now is the best time for me to hit it.

I'm just happy to do that. And hopefully I will hit tomorrow as well.

Just want to say thank you to the girls and to the coach because every day they tell me, just keep shooting, you're a great shooter. Just keep believing in yourself. I know they believe in me. I'm happy it finally happened.

Q. Allyson, you've become the first player in the history of this tournament to go for consecutive 15-15 games. Where is this coming from for you?

ALLYSON FERTIG: It's my job to rebound. For now just our team dynamics and stuff, I've really taken that rebounding role on.

But I would say awesome job with my teammates. Emily



had nine rebounds. We had a bunch of other guards clean up the boards really well today. It wasn't just me. Just really emphasizing that's my role, rebounding.

Q. Emily, you and Malene combined for 12 of the 17 assists tonight. What was working for you guys moving the ball?

EMILY MELLEMA: I'll shout out eight assists. That wasn't even. That was incredible for her and 14 points. She's really been our spark this tournament so far. I mean all year she's been incredible.

I think that's what our team thrives on getting everyone involved and sharing the ball. I'm glad I can be a part of that. But that means that our teammates were making baskets. And kudos to Malene. Eight assists, that's her career high.

Q. Emily, as a point guard, what kind of adjustments did you guys have to make to break that zone?

EMILY MELLEMA: I kindly challenged the team at halftime that we needed to be able to want to make a play and be a threat out there. And that on both sides of the ball. But especially in that in the zone, I didn't want people to hide or timid.

I challenged the team to be confident in our shots and be confident with the ball in our hands. That helped us a lot there in the second half. I'm not saying that that was on me that we did that. But that's part of on your team the experience we have I knew we'd figure it out.

A lot of players like Ola and Malene, McKinley came in, Kati did really well, Tess on the inside and everyone did really well and wanted the ball in the second half and made a lot of plays for each other.

Q. Allyson, you've been here before. What's it like to be in the title game and be one win away from the NCAA Tournament?

ALLYSON FERTIG: It's so fun. It's an experience you will



never feel again. So just having the opportunity to be in the championship game again -- but this time, hopefully, it's different.

It just shows how much work we've done during the season and we're finally at that spot where it all matters. The work has been done so now it's just time to focus in, get our bodies healthy and go win a championship.

Q. Emily and Ola, is the girl between you even capable of surprising you guys anymore?

EMILY MELLEMA: Yeah, he said that stat. I always laugh that they list all of her awards. And I just say it's boring at this point. It's like what's next at this point. So we're just used to it. Just an incredible player, incredible career. I always say I'm just really glad I can be a part of it.

Q. I know there's a lot of seniors and leaders on your team, all of you. Does it almost feel like a win one for Allyson right now win it all?

EMILY MELLEMA: That's the last thing we've got to do for as a team. And we're looking for one tomorrow. I think 1 through 16, we're ready to go get that one. We'll do whatever it takes. I know Allyson will be a huge part of that.

Q. Emily, your team is so experienced. Do you feel like that is the key with the way that you girls are able to come out in the second half and be kind of just so much more solid than you were in the first half?

EMILY MELLEMA: Yeah, and I think something we've echoed throughout this season, especially in the tournament -- I think Heather would attest to this as well -- we're trusting ourselves and each other. I think that takes care of a lot of things.

A lot of the first-half jitters, right, and kind of get it figured out by the second half I think has been our experience. Been here, done that, at this point. And really glad that it's gotten us this far. And excited to see how that helps us tomorrow as well.

Q. Emily or Allyson, how big was Ola's shots? She hit some really timely shots tonight. How important was that as a teammate just to see her be able to step up in that moment?

ALLYSON FERTIG: It was awesome. Like she was saying, we trust her. We see her knock those shots down all the time in practice. When she's confident and when she has her feet set she can knock them down. It's just a matter of time.

Right now when we needed her on the big stage, like, it was so amazing just to see. And hopefully that gives her confidence for the next game tomorrow and forever and ever. But it was really awesome just to see that. And we knew that. It was a matter of time.

Q. Do you have any early thoughts on San Diego State?

EMILY MELLEMA: We're just excited to play tomorrow. We don't care who it is. We're ready to go get a win tomorrow.

Q. When you saw that Colorado State lost last night, what was maybe the reaction to that game?

EMILY MELLEMA: No reaction. We watched it. We didn't really care who we played today. We knew we were going to go win it. That's what we talked about coming into it. We're going to win three straight. That's still the goal. We really didn't care which three those were.

ALLYSON FERTIG: I think it shows how impressive Mountain West basketball is. It's such a competitive conference. Anyone can win any night. So it's just really cool just to see how much our conference has grown and the level of basketball.

Q. Obviously, second title appearance in three years for this group. How does that feel just stability-wise to have this program where it's at right now? And do you feel that momentum can kind of carry you tomorrow night?

HEATHER EZELL: Absolutely. Huge credit to the senior class. When you look at McKinley and Ola, it's their third title game to be in. For these seniors, getting another chance to redemption from the last time.

I think that experience, I know we've talked about it, but that experience is going to pay off for us. And it's no doubt -- we've been here, we've done this and we're ready to go.

Q. Late in the game, Allyson did what she did. But production kind of started to dip a little bit. But others started to step up and bury the game for you. How important was that for you?

HEATHER EZELL: They were starting to send not just double but triple teams in. We were able to find some open baskets or open people and knock down those shots, just like we were able to do yesterday.

It comes down to exactly what these ladies said, is we



have confidence in every one of them. Get their feet set and knock down shots. If we find them in the right time, on time on target, we're going to get our feet set and knock it down.

Q. Does anything else surprise you anymore? And also that's a young Fresno State team. Does it remind you of maybe your team three years ago, but now you have the vets to get you over the humps in big moments?

HEATHER EZELL: 100 percent. But, no, nothing surprises me that Al does. The first time -- I think all year I had to tell her about the four-minute timeout there to stop running the court so hard.

Hey, I've got to conserve you a little, I don't want to take you off the floor, but I don't need sprinting every possession to go down to the offensive end when they're in a zone and they're just triple teaming you.

Nothing surprises me. The way she's prepared herself and the work she's done is an inspiration to everybody of what you can do when you put that work in.

Q. These last 12 games, I think your defense has held opponents to under 45 percent in all the games. What do you attribute this effort to at this moment?

HEATHER EZELL: That's what we do. That's our Cowgirl toughness. It starts on the defensive end. We hang our hat on that defensive end. When we need to get going, we talk about stop/score/stop. It's not going, okay, let's try and outscore this team. No, let's get stops. Those stops get us rolling.

I thought Em made a couple of big plays on defense that got our team going. When we pull down a tough rebound, whatever, that defensive end is what gets our offense going more than anything.

Q. Obviously experienced teams make runs in the postseason. That 15-0 run, what were you seeing while that was going on and what did that feel like from the bench?

HEATHER EZELL: Just making the right plays that we talked about. I know Em got into them a little bit at halftime. I echoed it: We've got to be ready to make a play. I thought we had -- maybe a little unsure. Once we settled in and going, no, we'll make the right play, then we went on that run. It was finding people at the right time at the right moments and ready for that moment.

Q. You've seen San Diego State twice. They're going

to be prepared for Allyson. What are your preliminary thoughts on that match-up tomorrow?

HEATHER EZELL: It's going to be a tough 40 minutes. There's no doubt, they're going to come with everything. They're in the championship game last time. I know they've got a bitter taste in their mouth what it comes down who wants it bring it for 40 minutes, all that attention to detail and come away with the championship.

Q. You seemed extra emotional after that game talking to the fans, pumping them up. Is that a relief and we don't want this ride ending right now?

HEATHER EZELL: Absolutely. I told them after senior night, after we beat UNLV, to come to Vegas and watch us cut down the nets. I'm holding to my promise. That's what I want, to make sure they're going to hold to theirs and be in the stands.

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