

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday March 9, 2018

Paul Weir Sam Logwood Troy Simons New Mexico Lobos

New Mexico - 83, Utah State - 68

PAUL WEIR: I can't say enough about what I think about Coach Duryea and Utah State, they have a great team. They wouldn't go away tonight, they kept fighting. You have to give them a lot of credit.

Right now we're moving forward, on to the next game. San Diego State is a tremendous team. We're in a really good place. I picked these two guys to come up here on purpose because they both have been through a lot this year, with me and with themselves. And they're kind of symbolic of our team.

And we never gave up. And Sam never quite gave up on me, and I never quite gave up on Sam. And Troy never quite gave up on me and I never gave up on Troy. And our team at the end of the day, even though we were 3 and 8 or whatever it was, never quite gave up on itself. And that still counts for something.

Chris Murray might not think there's a game tomorrow night, but we do. We're excited to be here. We're going to give it everything we've got. We've battled back from a lot, and that's America. And if Chris Murray doesn't want to believe in that, that's fine, but we're really looking forward to just giving it everything we've got tomorrow night. We've come a long way and we'll keep fighting.

I'm really thankful for these guys for sticking with our team. And I'm really happy to coach this basketball team.

Q. This being your senior year here, you've been through a few one and done's here at this tournament. What's it like now to be at this point with a shot at the championship tomorrow?

SAM LOGWOOD: Definitely one of the best highlights of my career. Probably the best. It's just a great feeling, like just fighting through adversity and finally getting what I've worked so hard for, just my teammates, as well. We've been through a lot. I've



personally been through a lot, Troy has been through a lot and the returners, as well. And we're seeing the work pay off and it's a blessing to be able to play tomorrow.

Q. This is for both Troy and Sam. There was a moment when Troy was going to the foul line and I see both of you guys with a smile on your face. And seeing what you guys have gone through this year and how you guys are enjoying playing basketball and you guys have a chance to go to your first NCAA tournament, what's going through your head right now?

TROY SIMONS: I'm just happy to be a part of this team. Like Coach Weir said, we went through some things with the team. And they accepted us back on the team and we came together as a family. And we're playing as a family now.

SAM LOGWOOD: Same thing as Troy said. It's just we're enjoying playing basketball again. There's times where you don't really enjoy playing it and it really gets to you. And just actually having fun playing basketball was really helping us win a lot of these games. We're really enjoying each other as a team and enjoying playing together. And I think that's the biggest thing for us right now why we've been so successful recently.

Q. In the first half I think Utah State was up 20-12. And then after that there was about like 8 minutes where they didn't score a field goal. What, if anything, changed with your defense or with your mindset out there to make that happen?

TROY SIMONS: Basically we wasn't speeding them up at first. And then once we got in the huddle Coach Weir said, We got to speed them up, make them turn it over. So we started speeding them up and making them turn it over.

SAM LOGWOOD: I wasn't too worried about it. It kind of goes back to a lot of the lessons we've learned earlier in the year, we've just got to stay poised. Coach Weir tells us if we're up 20, down 20, we've just got to stay the course and keep grinding it out, and that's what we did. And it worked out for us.

Q. Coach referenced the back and forth. In your words, each of your words, what happened? And why do you think you were allowed back on the

team and how thankful are you that you are?

SAM LOGWOOD: Personal reasons. And when I kind of figured it out, dealt with what I was dealing with I was very blessed and excited to be back on the team. It kind of changed my mindset.

So I think it was something that I needed, not as a basketball player, but as a man, just to kind of sit back and look at reality. And I think it's helped me a lot.

TROY SIMONS: The same as Sam. I just had to be a man and get through what I was going through. And the team never gave up on me. So basically, yeah.

Q. You mentioned that for a while there basketball wasn't fun. When was the last time you've had as much fun you've had lately playing basketball?

SAM LOGWOOD: I can't even remember, to be honest. But I'm just happy to be in the situation. I've learned to let go of the past, and we're very happy to be in the moment.

PAUL WEIR: If you're not here at a certain time, you can't ask questions.

Q. Troy, Sam, you are in the tournament, playing in the semifinal games. This morning Coach tells you you're running anyway. What did you think?

PAUL WEIR: I know what Sam thought but I don't know what Troy thought. (Laughter.)

SAM LOGWOOD: I mean, I didn't personally want to do it, but like Coach Weir, he's hard-core, so nothing is going to change no matter, rain, sleet, snow, championship game tomorrow, it doesn't really matter, we're going to stick to the course. We've just got to grind through it. And we just got it done.

Q. Did you believe him?

SAM LOGWOOD: No, I didn't, until he told us to get on the line and we started running.

Q. Is there something to be said for the fact, though, that all year long he's had the believe-or-leave kind of mentality and even in this moment he's not letting you guys change your mindset of the consequences for things like offensive rebounds against Wyoming and stuff like that.

SAM LOGWOOD: Oh, yeah. Honestly, I just think that little phrase is deeper than basketball. I think that phrase is more towards like just us growing as men. We've got to believe in what we're in or not do it. Because if you're not fully, whole-hearted into something, it's not going to work. You're not going to be happy. And I think that's something I've learned, if you're not all the way into something you're not going to have fun, you're just going to make yourself

miserable.

TROY SIMONS: Same as Sam. You've got to believe in yourself and believe in the system that Coach Weir set up for us, and if you don't, adios.

Q. Coach is going to love this one. What do you guys think of the fashion that he's doing and the sweater now two games in a row, 5-0 in the sweater this year?

SAM LOGWOOD: It's unique. It's different. Hey, we're winning when he wears the sweater, he can keep it on all day.

PAUL WEIR: They know more about fashion. I'm not great.

Q. I know you gave me a long look last night when I asked you if you were serious about the running. Were you considering at all not making them run because you guys did just play a quarterfinal game last night?

PAUL WEIR: I think as a coach you're challenged with those things every single day. I think as a leader of an organization you are what you tolerate, whatever those things may be. If we have a rule that you have to tuck your shirt in and there's one day someone doesn't tuck their shirt in, are you going to always hold people accountable every single time? And that's something I've tried to stick to.

No matter the time, no matter how serious the consequences may be, playing six players at Utah State, whatever it happens to be, our principles are our principles, and we have to stick through them no matter when that happens to be.

So, yeah, we had to do it.

Q. Any runnings for tomorrow?

PAUL WEIR: Yes.

Q. Did they do anything in this game they have to run for?

PAUL WEIR: Yep. Offensive rebounds, we gave up five.

Q. You're going to sprint before a title game?

PAUL WEIR: We always have sprinted for every offensive rebound we gave up. So we had 13 offensive rebound game, that was probably our roughest postgame. This morning we had seven and tomorrow we'll have five.

Q. Early there when I think Utah State was up 20-12 and you called that timeout, what exactly was it that you were trying to convey to your guys to get

things turned around?

PAUL WEIR: Yeah, I think it's been an interesting kind of journey with Utah State. We went up there with the six guys and McEwen just murdered us. And we really keyed on McEwen going into game two and Merrill really hurt us. And we went into this one really kind of focusing more on Merrill, and we didn't come out at the start of the game doing anything we were supposed to be doing on him. It was a lot of similar stuff with James the day before. He kind of got loose and made some shots. We just had to kind of clamp down on him.

We knew McEwen had played a lot of minutes and had kind of been shooting a lot more 3s lately. We felt good about how that matchup would be. But I thought we had to key in on Merrill. After that first couple of possessions -- not first couple -- first few minutes, we did a much better job with him the rest of the way.

Q. So after running, what kind of pep talk are you going to give your team before the game?

PAUL WEIR: We're not really big into the pep talks; we just get ready for the next game. We've done it all year, we've never talked about seeding. Right now we have to get ready for San Diego State and give it the best we can. It's one game at a time mentality, and at 3:00 tomorrow we'll just give it the best shot we have.

Q. San Diego State is on this little bit of a roll where it's sort of a redemption tour. They have played in the last three weeks, four teams or five teams that beat them earlier in the year, and they've beat every single one of them. And you're the only team that they have not beaten, because you've only played once. Knowing that and knowing you're playing a team that has a little bit of extra motivation, does that change how you approach a game or do you have to be aware of that heightened motivation?

PAUL WEIR: Not really. I think it was so long ago that we played San Diego State, I think we're both different teams right now.

The one thing I will say, I think we're both the freshest teams right now. I think when you look at this tournament and you look at maybe some of the great players that didn't play as well or some of the great teams that didn't play as well, I just think they're out of gas. And they've been grinding and grinding and playing guys 40 minutes a night and it just took a little bit of a toll. And I think when we got to March that showed up a little bit on some really great players and really great teams in our league.

But I feel like San Diego State and us, it's like we're still on an upward trajectory. I feel like that way just watching them. I watched their UNLV game. They

have a lot of energy. The two teams left are the teams that seem to be the freshest right now.

They're obviously enormous, they're big. It's Ivan Drago, whatever you want to say. That's what they are. They're special. When I did my all-conference awards they were drastically different than some of the ones that showed up.

I think Malik Pope is the best center in the league. I think Devin Watson is the best point guard. They're very talented, very good. We're going to have to play our hearts out. And we're going to have to give it everything we've got to close whatever gaps that happen to be there, whether it's size, talent, or whatever, and give ourselves a chance to win a game.

Q. You've been preaching about kaisan all year long, about how to get better every single day. So what can you do better tomorrow to give you the best chance to make the NCAA tournament?

PAUL WEIR: At this point all I can control is the 16 hours that we have. And we have to have a better 16 hours than them, whatever that happens to be. We watched film in the locker room as soon as the game ended. We have to manage and manipulate the next 16 hours better than they do. That's all we can do. Then once the ball goes up, you are who you are, both them and us. And what happens at that point, we'll see how it goes.

But again, all I can do as far as the leader of our organization is just manipulate the next 16 hours as best I can, and that's all we're going to try and do.

Q. I know you're not too reflective. I won't ask you to be overly reflective. But the two guys sitting with you, getting to the championship game, the two guys sitting with you this postseason, were two guys you suspended for various reasons this year. Is that as unlikely a duo of guys be the two you invited after a semifinal win?

PAUL WEIR: If you showed up on time, Jeff, you know what I mean, my opening statement would have reflected that.

I think it's very symbolic of our team. We've never given up. We were 3 and 8. I never quite gave up on Troy or Sam and they never quite gave up on me, and our team never gave up on us. As bad as it got, as many losses as piled up, losing by 30 at Boise, whatever had gone on, no one ever quite threw in the towel.

And that's why I'm really glad to have these two up here tonight. I'm glad our team has got to this point. Because we never gave up. And there's some

satisfaction in that. When you're a great team, when you're picked first in the league or second in the league or you have NBA prospects and you're successful, that's amazing. I'm happy for people like that.

When you're picked 9th and put a bunch of new kids together and you go through the trials and tribulations that we did and you can get to this point now, it's refreshing and comforting. We're not done, we have to give it everything we've got tomorrow afternoon.

But for them in particular, I'm very happy for them.

Q. In the specifics of this game, and Anthony Mathis was a double-digit scorer, scoreless tonight, didn't score much yesterday. If teams are going to take him away, are you okay with that because it's opening other things, or are you going to do something different to get Anthony more looks?

PAUL WEIR: I thought he got some good looks tonight. We hadn't been able to get in the Thomas & Mack, I think that affected us a little bit. We weren't able to shoot in there today. We got 20 minutes the day before. We like to shoot the ball. We spend a lot of time in the gym shooting. And unfortunately we haven't had a lot of access to get in and get shots up. I think that might have a little bit to do it.

Hopefully tomorrow night Tone will be able to make some shots. I thought he had some pretty good looks tonight. They just didn't go down. Especially there late, shots that he usually make. Tomorrow afternoon hopefully he's able to make them and our team can prosper off of that.