

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday March 8, 2016



Stacie Terry Ahjalee Harvey Ariell Bostick San Diego State

Colorado State - 53 San Diego State - 41

THE MODERATOR: Coach, start with thoughts on today's game.

HEAD COACH STACIE TERRY: I thought congratulations to Colorado State for doing a great job and coming out with a victory today. But I wanted to also congratulate my squad for the fight that I saw in them, the dedication to the game plan. We had a great game plan to keep the score low. We knew we had a chance if we kept it low. We made it look ugly. That wasn't just because they played bad, that had something to do with how we defended. And really proud of their effort and what we've been able to do in the second half of this conference season and what we were able to do here in the tournament.

We leave with heavy hearts but we're excited about the future and what's to come.

Q. You said it best with your defense. You guys went on multiple scoring droughts, 6-minute, 7-minute runs where you didn't get a point. And you look up and you're only down by 5 or 7. For the ladies, does that keep your confidence level high with how well you were playing defensively? Were you able to not necessarily focus on how bad the offense was going for you?

AHJALEE HARVEY: Definitely. I think that our defense definitely gets us going. When we're able to pressure and eliminate a team from scoring, that always works in our favor. We know we wanted to eliminate really their 3's. We were able to do that and kind of keep them in the 2 range. And that gave us momentum going into the second half.

HEAD COACH STACIE TERRY: That was definitely our game plan. Going back and watching all the film, my staff and I, we know Colorado State very well and we made them go to their B move. And they have a lot of weapons, a lot of weapons on their team. And we held the majority of them in check, except for one. So for

the most part we did exactly what we needed to do and even had a chance to win this thing, as poorly as we played on the offensive side.

We made some defensive errors down the stretch. But that's who we've been all year. You never know what team is going to show up on offense, and sometimes we're really good, and sometimes we're not so good. But their effort has been phenomenal these last 10 to 12 games. And that's what put us in the place where we were today.

Q. Their rebounding, too, they out-rebounded you by 10. In the first half, for as bad as the shooting was you had zero offensive rebounds, giving yourself no second-chance opportunities. Was it just difficult inside against a team like that when they're so long and bigger?

HEAD COACH STACIE TERRY: Well, they weren't shooting the ball either very well, and they didn't have a whole lot of offensive rebounds, either. They're so tall and we're so small. These little bitty girls here, they're little but mighty. They just beat us in that category. So they had some height on us.

I didn't think we got some calls down the stretch maybe we should have. But we tried our best to attack. We need to get better on the glass. My staff and I are going to sit down and figure out how to do that. We were missing, and we should have been crashing harder. I think we balanced it out, making sure they didn't get the offensive rebounds, as well.

Q. Yesterday, Coach, we talked about the whole playing here, going home, coming back, and you were comfortable with them going home, sleeping in their own beds. Anything maybe as far as playing yesterday, having to come back and play the first game today, were they tired at all?

HEAD COACH STACIE TERRY: That was tough. We didn't have a lot of time to prepare. But I tell you, these kids, they were in it to win it in the war room last night trying to come up with the game plan. My staff put an excellent game plan together for them to follow and they executed it to the fullest, to the best that they possibly could.

Colorado State is a very good team. They're ranked and No. 1 in our conference because they're very, very

good. I thought we gave them all that they wanted.
This score wasn't by chance. This is how we wanted to
play. We knew we had to keep them in the low scoring
battle to have a shot and they did a great job executing
our game plan, we just came up short.

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday March 8, 2016



Ryun Williams Elin Gustavsson Ellen Nystrom Colorado State

Colorado State - 53 San Diego State - 41

THE MODERATOR: Coach, if we can start with you, your thoughts on today's game?

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: Well, the first game is always difficult, I think, as a 1 seed. I think you saw a group maybe a little tight early. But outstanding defensively, really an outstanding job. They've got three guards out there that are really good, really good when the ball is in our hands, playing off the ball screen. I thought our kids were exceptional keeping the basketball in front, really the whole game.

Once we got it settled down in our mind and midway through the third and the fourth quarter, we started playing a little bit more like us. I think that was San Diego State's plan to shorten the game. They wanted this game in the 50s. And that's okay. We can guard really well. And that's what won us the game today.

Q. There was a point in the fourth quarter Keyora, she took a shot, she drove into the paint for a 6-footer, misses it, rebounds it herself on the weak side and puts it back. Seems like that might have been a pivotal point for a momentum swing to sort of get you guys going on that final run to put the game away. Would you say that was a momentum point?

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think that was obviously a really big play. And Key's had some really big moments for us this year in some really crucial situations. She's such a quick jumper. She makes those plays a couple of times during the basketball ballgame. But the point at which it took place, I think it kind of -- maybe it pushed that thing to 10. I think that was our goal, midway through the third if we could get it to ten, get it to ten, maybe we could breathe a little bit, right? But that was a big play, you're right.

Q. Just how important was it for you to be on your game offensively, because obviously your

teammates' shots weren't falling and you took over from an offensive standpoint. Did you feel that pressure to just kind of take over?

ELIN GUSTAVSSON: Well, I never feel pressure, because our team, like everyone is good. And we play really good as a team. But I just feel like, I think I was focused in a good way when it comes to me, like I'm a person that thinks a lot. And this time I didn't think that much, because I feel like I wanted it so much. I felt like I just played with my heart. I didn't even feel like it was just me, like we're a team, and it felt like we're still playing as a team. We still play good as a team.

Q. Do you guys feel like there were maybe a little bit of nerves your first game here? Obviously you guys had the winning streak, all that going. Do you feel like it was a little bit of nerves the first half and maybe into the third quarter there?

ELLEN NYSTROM: I think it's always hard playing the first game, because we wanted to win it so bad. We really want to play the final right now. But we've just got to take it slow and get into the game and we got into the game as the game progressed and that was good.

ELIN GUSTAVSSON: And maybe we were so excited. When you're super excited it can go a little bit wrong. But I feel like we were still like excited in a good way, as Coach said, we had to calm down a little bit, which we did.

Q. Now with the victory it sets up a possible rematch with New Mexico, who kind of took you guys to the wire down there at their place. What kind of challenge would they be if you played them?

ELIN GUSTAVSSON: Well, we talked about that, everyone in this tournament is really good. Like it doesn't matter who we're playing, like everyone can win against everyone, because everyone had a different mentality in the tournament.

But I feel like we're just excited. It doesn't matter who we play. As Coach said, Lakers can come in and play. We're always ready. But of course it's going to be a more exciting game mentally, I guess.

Q. Just from your perspective how big was Eli's game today for you guys, obviously with everyone

struggling offensively?

ELLEN NYSTROM: It was huge. She really stepped up and I'm really proud of her.

Q. Does that define the team at today's game, each game it can be someone else?

ELLEN NYSTROM: Definitely, we have all the players can step in and do a 20-point game. So it's hard to scout us, because who are you going to take away? If you take away Jamie, Eli is going to have a good game. If you take away Eli, Jamie is going to have a good game. It's hard.

Q. Was there anything specific about this matchup that you think was favorable for you, or did the game just kind of come to you?

ELIN GUSTAVSSON: No, I don't know, I feel like it's just more up here when it comes to me (indicating). Yeah, I think that's the best answer I can say, to be honest.

Q. This tournament's been a tough place for Colorado State in recent years. What is it about this environment that just kind of makes it harder for you guys to bring your normal game out on the court?

ELLEN NYSTROM: I think it's hard because, like Eli said, everybody has a different mentality and everybody wants to win this one, it's one game at a time. If you lose you're out. It's a lot on the line. It's a lot of pressure. But we try to keep the pressure away and just go into ourselves and play our game.

Q. Is that harder or easier now that you've won 26 in a row, that pressure, do you feel more of it or less of it?

ELLEN NYSTROM: We don't think about it like that. We take one game at a time. The games that we played, they're out of our mind. It's only the next game. It's either San Jose or New Mexico.

Q. How important was it the way that you guys finished this game? Obviously things were pretty chaotic and ugly there at first, but finally until the fourth quarter you looked like yourselves.

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: You must just watch the offensive end because the defensive end was pretty.

I think the end is -- you saw our kids loosen up a little bit. You saw them make just some typical basketball plays that they usually make. Alana got comfortable, scored inside. You saw Keyora have a little moment. You saw Eli, Elin hit a jump shot. Jamie got comfortable at the foul line, made a shot on the baseline.

I think all of that was important. It needed to take place, because the biggest thing you need to do in a tournament is settle in. You have to get settled in. And when you're the one seed that's sometimes difficult. Everybody here wants the Rams to lose, everybody. We know that. And so maybe they -- I mean, it's human nature to feel that a little bit. But you've got to get that out of your system. And I think as that game progressed the kids did a nice job of playing like we're capable of playing.

Q. Coach, talk about the pressure of overcoming the history in this tournament. You talked about the win streak. What about the fact that in the entire Mountain West Conference men and women you're the only ranked team. Is that in the back of their minds and how do you try to keep that out of their focus and take it game by game in terms of having to live up to anything?

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: We don't talk about that because that's something we can't control. We can't control what number they put in front of us. We know that. The only thing we can control is the next 40 minutes. We've won 20-some in a row. You don't do that unless you have that mentality. You don't. These kids are prepared every night. They're focused every night. And although it might not be pretty every night, they still find a way to win.

The biggest thing this group does is support each other. I think you saw that out there today. And when this group does that they're going to really put themselves in a position to win. And this time of year it's win and move on. We know that. But the stuff we can't control, we don't even worry about it.

Q. Coach, Eli, Ellen, and Jamie all played over 39 minutes in this game. Was that part of your game plan? Does that worry you down the line?

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: It doesn't worry me. It wasn't a very strenuous game. San Diego State, I think they're playing -- smart playing, I think, too, was to shorten that game. When you play San Diego State you're not going to score a lot of points. We know that because they grind out possessions. They play side one, they play side two, they play side three in their ball screen game. That shot clock ticks down to under 10 before they're shooting. So it was going to be that type of game.

But we've won a lot of different ways this year. We've won scoring points. We've won scoring not many points. We've won playing pretty, playing ugly. But the key is that these kids continue to put themselves in a position to win. And as a coach that's all you can ask of your team.

San Diego State was outstanding today. I thought defensively early their pressure got to us. They were pressuring ball and got us on our heels a little bit. We held that ball a lot, and that's not us. We usually move the ball a little bit better.

Q. Coach, really all season, whether it's been the second quarter or third quarter or fourth quarter you guys have made one big run to put games out of reach. Were you on the bench just waiting for that after the struggles on offense, were you waiting for that to go?

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: Well, I think we sit on the bench and we trust our players. We trust that at some point they're going to get this thing where it needs to get to. We had no other reason not to think that way because that's how they've been all year long. And some games it's come earlier than others.

But, yeah, you're -- we trust that at some point they're going to get this thing calmed down in their head. I think maybe you saw us sub a little quicker in that second half. I think Coach Moser did a great job of that. And I think maybe that calmed them down little bit.

Q. You guys obviously defensively, did you play a lot better defensively in this game or did you just have to rely on it more because the offense maybe wasn't clicking as well as it normally does in?

ELLEN NYSTROM: I think mostly we play good defense, but we knew if we keep them to low scoring we can win the game because we're always going to score, even though it looked pretty ugly, we still scored 53 points.

HEAD COACH RYUN WILLIAMS: 53, that was quite the explosion, we've still got it.

ELLEN NYSTROM: If we keep teams to 41 points we're going to win games.

Q. Are you feeling relieved now after -- you lost the last two games in this tournament the last two years. What's the feeling right now?

ELLEN NYSTROM: I think we're focused on the game tomorrow.

ELIN GUSTAVSSON: We try not to compare to last year. We're a different team.

ELLEN NYSTROM: It's out of our heads, we just want to play.

ELIN GUSTAVSSON: We just want to sleep, wake up and play.