

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 8, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Fresno State Bulldogs Coach Ryan McCarthy Avery Watkins Emilia Long

Postgame Press Conference



UNLV 75, Fresno State 65

THE MODERATOR: For Fresno State we have student-athletes Emilia Long, Avery Watkins, Coach Ryan McCarthy. Coach, let's start with you and get your thoughts on today's game.

RYAN McCARTHY: I was proud of our effort. Our execution simply wasn't good enough for the level of game that we were competing in today, but for a team to go down on what we believe in, in toughness and togetherness, for a first-year team to go out there and compete with UNLV, it's not bad for a bunch of D2 kids and benchwarmers at the Division I level.

I'm proud of them. Proud of how they came together. I think we surprised a lot of people this year, and whatever happens after this is we build this program into a championship-level program. It's because of them.

We owe them a lot. Fresno State owes them a lot. They gave their hearts to this program and to this university, and I'm very proud of the way that they represented us and Fresno State.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. This will be the same question for you two. When you guys came to Fresno State, obviously it's a first year of a rebuild, first year under Coach Ryan McCarthy. What was your mindset coming into it? Looking back, how are you guys kind of looking at the season?

EMILIA LONG: Yeah, when I chose to come to Fresno State I had played for the coaching staff last year at UAA,

so I was one of those transfers that came in. And I wanted to follow them because I believed in, like, what they do and what they're about. I knew it was going to be like a first year building up a program and starting something, and that was something that I really wanted to be a part of.

Looking back on the season, I'm proud of my team and I'm proud of us because we came a long ways from where we started until now. We did improve a lot.

I think we should be proud of ourselves for the season, even though it didn't end how maybe we wanted to.

But at the end of the day, I don't look back on anything, like I have no regrets. I'm proud of us, and I'm glad I did this.

EVERY WATKINS: Yeah, I agree with Emily. I'm really proud of our team from where we started. Especially we were picked ninth, and we finished seventh, and that's not easy to do. I'm just really proud of us.

Q. As Coach McCarthy said, he wants to build this program into something that is really a powerhouse. In ten years or so when that happens, how are you guys going to look back on this season and be, like, we were the first ones to kind of play a role in that?

EMILIA LONG: Yeah, we just talked about that after the game, too. We were the first team to do it under this program -- or under this coaching staff, and so I think looking back on it after a few years or ten years or whatever, I think we'll be, like, proud to say, like, oh, we went to Fresno State. Like I went to Fresno State. Then my family and stuff, they can look back on it and see, like, this is a good team, it's a good program, because I know it will be.

EVERY WATKINS: Yeah, I agree with Millie.

Q. I just want to do ask about the second quarter, because that's when you guys were most effective I think defensively. What was working the best in that period? I guess just what made UNLV so difficult to guard?

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EVERY WATKINS: I think what worked for us a lot was just denying them, denying their passes, giving them ball pressure, making them use their nondominant hands and then just cleaning up on the boards I think was what really worked for us.

I think UNLV is difficult to guard, because they have some three-point threats, and they were really hot from the three-point line. I think we did a better job in the second quarter of shutting that down.

EMILIA LONG: Yeah, I agree. They're a really talented team, so they were really hard to guard. We had to play really good team defense, and I think when we didn't let them run what they wanted to run, that's when we were most effective defensively.

I feel like when they were most effective on their part offensively is when we kind of just let them run whatever they wanted and they punished us for that.

I think like defensively when we get up in them and pressure them and stuff, I think we're really like effective and tough.

EVERY WATKINS: One thing that stuck out to me is right before halftime Millie's defensive effort on the ball, getting steals, causing them turnovers in pressure, she's just an amazing defender. I think that's what really got us going in the second quarter.

THE MODERATOR: I'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach.

Q. I'm wonder if anything you can just describe the process of game planning for a team like UNLV? What's the priority, and how do you kind of approach that process?

RYAN McCARTHY: You know, you pray really hard that they miss a lot of shots (laughing). No, they're really talented.

Our best defensive approach is just to kind of blow up their actions and try to bully them out of the half court, because one-on-one you're not going to win a lot of battles against them, or at least we weren't.

So we kind of had to junk it up a little bit. We ran some amoeba, quite a bit of amoeba tonight, which probably hasn't been done in this gym since Tarkanian was here, and press them and kind of get the game sped up a little bit, because that's not necessarily what they're trying to do.

I think in the country they're definitely in the top third of the half court execution team if we're talking analytically, and then I think stylistically, you know, their zone offense was just something we felt we matched up well with.

The hard part on that is they had some girls that normally don't shoot very well shoot pretty dang good tonight, so God bless them on that.

Q. Just to add on to her question, when they shoot the lights-out like that, like the little bit they did tonight, how do you kind of address that midgame? Obviously you guys go in with a set game plan, but when things happen, things change, what do you do on the fly to try to change?

RYAN McCARTHY: You know, a lot of it was just one-on-one breakdowns. I mean, Meadow Roland is a very difficult player to guard one-on-one. She gets into the paint, gets a paint touch, and we got to go stop her from getting an easy layup. We were giving up some perimeter shots on extra passes and spacing things that UNLV does very well. They can spread the floor with four shooters.

Coach La Rocque does a really good job with her team. This is a team that we aspire to be like one day. You know, when you've got a talented roster like that you're going to give up certain things, and we gave up perimeter shooting today.

Q. You guys have played basically the last three weeks of the season with about eight or nine ladies. Did it feel like their legs gave out on them a little bit or any fatigue start settling in?

RYAN McCARTHY: Yeah, maybe. Any time you're playing back-to-back games with eight players at the Division I level, that's kind of crazy talk.

But you know -- and especially when you're having to be put in a situation to press, because we needed to create more possessions in this game to give ourselves a chance.

Yeah, I think that did. We just don't have that depth yet. You know, I think in the future it will be 94 feet of pressing for 40 minutes, and it will look a lot different than this.

But hey, credit to our ladies. They gave everything they had, and I'm really proud of the way they competed tonight.

Q. I want to ask about your thoughts about the state of the program after your first season, just reflecting on your first year and then what kind of your goals are for the offseason and getting ready for next season?

RYAN McCARTHY: We'll have to replace quite a few. We've signed some pretty good players already. We are excited about the ladies that we're looking at, but the future of the program is fine.

We've established a winning culture. I didn't come here to compete. I came here to win. When we're talking about ten years, if we're not competing for championships in ten years, I'm not going to be sitting here. I'm going to be fired.

So we're going to make sure that we do our best to be in that position and bring a team into the Pac-12 that can pass other teams up. We've already passed teams up this year.

If you look at the league where they were at, we're passing teams up that already had their rosters set. Their coaching staffs have already decided what their culture is. Now we're creating something, and our goal is to do something Fresno State has never done.

This program has never won an NCAA Tournament game, ever since basketball has been invented. So that's what we're trying to do here.

Q. Millie, it was her final game tonight at Fresno State. You coached her at UAA. She struggled shooting the ball a little bit tonight, but she made up for it in other ways. She still had 19 points and 5 rebounds. Did her performance tonight encapsulate her as a player, just giving you literally 40 minutes on the court tonight?

RYAN McCARTHY: Yeah, man, she's a special kid. I'm just really glad she came here and gave us everything, and that's what we want out of every player that wears this jersey to encapsulate what Millie Long is, and we're really proud of her.

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