

Mountain West Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 9, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Colorado State Rams
Coach Ryun Williams

Marta Leimane

Brooke Carlson

Postgame Press Conference



Colorado State 66, UNLV 59

THE MODERATOR: We have student-athletes Brooke Carlson, Marta Leimane, Coach Ryun Williams. Can we get some thoughts on tonight's game?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Hard-fought victory by our ladies. That was a really tough, tough effort. I don't know if I've ever been more proud of a basketball team than I am of my group right now, and it took everybody. It took a great effort for four quarters against a UNLV team, you guys, that they have incredible players, incredible coaching staff.

So we knew it was going to be a monster effort, and our kids were ready to deliver it. Proud that they did.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Marta, when you're waiting to check in for the first time in the first quarter, what are you thinking about given what you were seeing shooting-wise from the rest of the team, and then you hit those two -- or those three, I guess, from three, and what ended up working consistently for you to get you to 16 points on the night?

MARTA LEIMANE: I think I was a little stressed before the game, and I think it actually helped me a lot walking into the game. I think I have to thank my teammates a lot for good ball movement and playing for each other, not just individually. I think that's why I got those threes off.

Once I hit that first one, I think that really boosted my confidence.

Q. Marta, a couple of weeks ago you suggested to me

that somewhat the end was near. Are you feeling that a lot in this tournament?

MARTA LEIMANE: I mean, yeah. We don't get -- we don't have a lot of these left, and I'm thankful that we got one more.

But yeah, that was my mentality. I'm pretty sure that's all of us. We kind of talked about it. It's now or never, you know. We kind of picked it up, and it was pretty good.

Q. You guys did huddle when Lexus left the floor. It was -- obviously the way it happened, it was kind of shocking, sudden to you guys. What were you guys telling each other as you huddled up as a group before you even went to the bench?

BROOKE CARLSON: We were just talking about how we are going to play together, keep it up. As Coach was saying, nothing is stronger than a wounded bear, so we knew that we had to keep playing and fight through it.

At the end of the day, we came together and got it done.

Q. What kind of bear are you then?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Marty, what kind of bear are you?

MARTA LEIMANE: A Latvian bear.

RYUN WILLIAMS: That's her nickname.

Q. Curious, though, part of the scoring was tough to score tonight for anybody. What stands out to you also the defensive effort that you got from Hannah inside, Maddie inside, because I believe Brown and Roland were combined 6 of 20 something.

MARTA LEIMANE: I think we took away what they were really good at, and that was just being really, really aggressive in the paint. From there, I think it helped us to get some stops and get some better offense.

Q. What started to click really offensively? I know,

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Brooke, for you, you missed your first five shots. You get a couple of blocked. You know that they've got good rim protectors, but it didn't seem like either you or Kloe or anybody gave up. What finally started to kind of click attitude-wise offensively?

BROOKE CARLSON: I feel like it's one of those games where that's going to happen. You got to just keep playing through it. You got to trust in the work you do, trust in your teammates, and just find a way to get it done, whether it's either passing it or finishing it.

So however you can get it done on the offensive end.

Q. Then, Marty, for you I know there was turnovers down for a problem that gave them a 7-0 run in like 22 seconds; made that a tight game. Again, you guys kind of came together. How did you guys calm yourselves down as a group?

MARTA LEIMANE: I don't know. We weren't really stressed, I think. Maybe like a little bit when we started to like get those turnovers. But we trusted in our coaches that they're going to make the right calls.

RYUN WILLIAMS: I'm glad you guys weren't stressed. I was. I'll be honest.

Q. For Brooke, you've had some big games down the stretch. What's kind of your mentality when you come out of the break, you hear what Coach has to say, and I guess just really kind of take it to the next level?

BROOKE CARLSON: I feel like just working for my teammates, working for the team. We want to get the win, so whatever I can do to help that out.

So I'm just trying to go out there and just play with whatever they give me.

Q. Marta, when Lexus does go down and you've kind of started to find that rhythm, find that flow there in the second half, what did you kind of can think that expectation for your role was for the rest of the game?

MARTA LEIMANE: I knew that I have like a big role to fill, because like Lex is a really, really good player for us, and she's been kind of leading our team. Just wanted to do it for her and for our team, because if she goes down we have a lot more players that want to help each other up and pick each other up.

So that was kind of my mentality, that I have a role to fill, her role, and just lift my teammates up.

Q. Do either one of you find it kind of fun that this is going to be an all-Colorado final tomorrow?

BROOKE CARLSON: I love it. Yeah, I think it brings a lot of energy to the state also just figuring out who is going to get it done, who is going to come out on top. So it's going to be really fun.

Q. Are you expecting that when Ryun starts the scout the first name you're going to hear is Perry?

BROOKE CARLSON: Oh, yeah, 100%, but we're going to get it done. It's going to happen, so...

Q. Brooke, when we're looking at the stat sheet tonight, 7 for 7 on free-throws; a lot of those coming in the final minutes. How would you describe what you were thinking about when the game was that close, that down to the wire, and you're standing at the line?

BROOKE CARLSON: I feel like I was just trying to calm myself down, control it. Those are, like -- those type of situations I like to be in just with that pressure, so however I can figure out to calm myself down, so...

RYAN WILLIAMS: Her brother is here tonight, and her brother's pet peeve is when Brooke misses free-throws.

BROOKE CARLSON: Yeah. That is very true.

RYUN WILLIAMS: Blake gets a little shout-out.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Questions for Coach.

Q. Ryun, I'm just curious, have you texted Kyle yet?

RYUN WILLIAMS: That's a good question. I'm going to text her immediately when I'm done with your silly questions. But yeah, you remember that day, don't you? You remember that day when we're sitting -- I'm sitting in my office.

It was in the summertime and we're watching film of Marty. Basically I asked my assistant at the time, Kylie Bichon, I said, the call is yours. I said, the call is yours. You want to sign her? Kylie made the call.

I think we owe Kylie a dinner or something, because that was a very good recruit. And Marty has been special, you guys. You can tell by the way she talks. She's all team-first. Always has been.

Whatever we've asked Marty to do, she has done with a very cheerful heart and whatever the team needs. She's

had performances like that tonight.

It's not the first time, but she hasn't done that this year really, but -- so it couldn't happen to a better young lady. Marty, she's a tough cookie. She's got a really strong, confident mind. Might not come off that way, but I'm not surprised.

Q. This isn't even her season high, let alone her career high. All those games she's had, she's never been more important to what happened in a game than she was tonight, was she?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Totally, and that was the big message at halftime. Your role is this now, so embrace it. Don't be afraid of it. Go.

Yeah, it was needed, obviously. You guys mentioned it was -- I thought in the first quarter we were finding pretty good shots. We were sitting there on the bench like, let's go, let's make some of these.

I think once we -- and we said in the timeout, just somebody make one and it will become contagious. Lo and behold, it was Marty that got us going. It was neat to see her just build the confidence for our entire group.

I think once we saw a couple go in, I think our kids really started to feel like we can generate some really positive possessions and make a run at this thing.

Q. You look at the size of UNLV's roster, what they were doing defensively for long stretches of the game, but then you look at 28-10 advantage for you guys in points in the paint on both ends. What kind of led to that, and how big was that for you tonight?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Brooke gets to the paint a lot. Our drivers did a good job of getting in there. I thought the kids that battled, Roland and Brown tonight, were phenomenal. I mean, that is some toughness right there. Those two are very, very difficult to handle. They play with incredible force. They're both very skilled. We held them, what, 6 for 25, I think it was.

It took a team effort obviously, but they're tired. Maddie Bragg, what did she have, four points tonight? And the last time we beat them in Fort Collins, Maddie had two points. Yet, she was the MVP of the game in my mind, because of the force and how she disrupted their interior play.

Tonight was no different. I thought Hannah -- that's a tough ask. Hannah is used to guarding guards, and we think Roland is a big guard, in all honesty. She's got some force.

I thought Hannah had her toughest performance as a Ram ever.

Q. Do you have any idea about Lexus' status going into tomorrow?

RYUN WILLIAMS: We don't. I was told questionable. Just a lower extremity. Obviously you guys saw it. You saw her kind of limp off there. We're just getting some testing here to see what that's all about.

Q. Then two nights in a row with 25 points in the fourth quarter. What kind of confidence does that build knowing if tomorrow night isn't going well early, that that run could be there again?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Well, I mean, yeah, it's nice to finish a game like that. We're going to have to be more consistent tomorrow, but let's give credit to the other team. I mean, they're trying to stop you too, right? I thought UNLV really guarded us well early on especially. It will be no different tomorrow.

Sometimes it takes some quarters to just get the rhythm of how they are guarding you, where we can generate offense, who we have to facilitate through, and that's -- our kids do a really good job of kind of realizing and figuring out throughout a basketball game this is how this thing needs to go for us to generate offense.

They've done a good job all year of that, and that's the experience that -- and we've logged a lot of minutes with that crew. I'm not surprised.

Q. Last thing from me. Over the last 19 -- or 18 meetings with Air Force, it's split 9-9. What is it about that match-up that has been so difficult for you guys, because they haven't had that success against other top teams?

RYUN WILLIAMS: We're a rival for Air Force. That's a rival game. Air Force, Wyoming, those are rivals. You can throw out the records. Don't they say that with rivalry games, the record doesn't matter?

You can see why. I mean, look at what they're doing. Look at what they've done. Perry is arguably the hottest player in the country right now. When you have that weaponry -- and they're always disruptive. They always play with incredible effort, and Adams is really playing well.

That's why. We know we're going to have to play our best game of the tournament tomorrow. There's no question about that.

Q. Considering the circumstances, Lexus only playing 8 minutes, you're down at the time, is this one of the more remarkable wins that you've had in your career from a team standpoint?

RYUN WILLIAMS: Totally. Totally. That was the message to the group after the game is I don't think I've ever been more proud of a group because of that and because it was, like, we lean on Lex a lot. A lot. That young lady is a huge on-ball defender for us. She's a rebounder. She's tough. We ask her to score it. She's an All-Conference performer.

When that goes down, for a team to rally behind that, that just shows you how much they really care for each other right there. Really neat to see. Yeah, couldn't be more proud.

Q. Now, when we're looking at the game tonight, you said it yourself, you're looking for players off the bench to hit those big-time shots in big-time moments. Off the bench somebody for me was McKenna Murphy; 3 for 3 after a couple of rough shooting performances recently. How would you describe the affect that she had on the game tonight?

RYAN WILLIAMS: Murphy is a very confident young lady. She's got a very tough mindset as well. I'm glad you asked that question, because arguably you could say McKenna Murphy is one of the highlight players of this game. She hit the big one in the second half. She does a great job reading screens. I thought she guarded really well tonight.

She kind of got us off that schneid as well in that first half. Usually to win big games like this, it's going to take those -- you know, those out liar type players that maybe their minutes are a little inconsistent here and there. You know, they don't start or what have you, but she was ready for the moment.

Murphy, she's made a lot of big shots. She's a four-time state champion. I'm not surprised at that. I'm happy for her, because that young lady works, and she was ready for the moment.

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