

March 20, 2014



San Diego State - 73
New Mexico State - 69

An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

COACH MARVIN MENZIES: Just want to thank the Lord for this opportunity to coach these guys. Great group of players. Great staff. Also, want to take a minute to just also make note that we were -- we played tonight for Sam Lacey who passed away at 66. You guys may know he was probably if he's not the greatest, one of the greatest of all time to play at New Mexico State in that Final Four team of 1970. And left behind three daughters and a host of other family members. They had a memorial service for him today, so. We can go ahead and start with questions.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Sim, talk about the way this team responded on this kind of stage today?

SIM BHULLAR: I think tonight we showed a lot of heart. The same situation in the WAC tournament. We were down nine at the half and guys were in the locker room and everybody's heads were up. We all talked about it, the fight's never over until the clock hits zero, so we just came out in the second half and played our hearts

out and we took it into overtime. It showed the team has resilience. This is a big thing for us to come back from down 12 at halftime. Especially at this time of year, I think it's a big thing for us.

Q. Talk about what this says about New Mexico State. Sim, you're coming back, Kevin, you're a Senior.

SIM BHULLAR: Definitely shows that we got a deep team. Guys are ready to contribute. We got all five starters coming back. Really going to miss Kevin and Renaldo. Kevin was our guy, man. He knocked down a shot whenever we needed him, and Ben was the big guy in the middle. Whenever I went down with an injury, he really stepped up. Really going to miss those guys and it's going to be tough to replace them next year, but hopefully we can.

KEVIN ARONIS: I think with the other guys that are coming back, they're pretty young, and definitely with a good summer off-season hard work, I think that they can definitely make some noise next year.

Q. Kevin, you guys are used to having a pretty dominant player in Daniel and what he can do on the court. But, today you had to face Xavier Thames, another dominant guard. Can you talk about what he did that was dangerous and what it's like to play against him?

KEVIN ARONIS: Well, he's a complete player, so he can beat you in multiple ways. I thought we did a pretty good job for the most part, him making pretty tough 2-point jumpers. I think he definitely earned it and had a good game.

Q. Kevin, talk about the three at the end of regulation. It seemed like you got two really open looks for off of the inbound play and then just off of a loose ball there?

KEVIN ARONIS: Well, the inbounds play was, I don't remember if I made it, but I think it was a yeah, I think Daniel got the rebound and he had great court awareness to know that we needed a

three down in the end seconds. So, I know, I think we made a little eye contact and I just was spotting up and he found me and I think I dribbled to the left and made the shot.

Q. Were you surprised how -- I mean you were, you hit some open shots like were you surprise that were you were able to get those open shots tonight? And did you feel like you needed to make some 3's to kind of open things up?

KEVIN ARONIS: Yeah, I think the three ball kind of would have gave us a little extra offense against their very good defense. I think, if we hit a few 3's, I think it would kind of help us out a little bit. So, I was really hunting for my shot. I got a few open looks and a few tough ones, but I think we did a pretty good job of getting me some good looks.

Q. Sim, it looked like early in the game the post guys were getting the ball knocked away from you like was that just -- did you guys have to kind of get used to the way the game was called or just being stronger with the ball early on in the game?

SIM BHULLAR: I'm not sure how to answer that. I guess it was kind of both. The referees were trying to let us play a little bit and it was us holding the ball strong and going up too and finishing strong. I think we had a tough time with that, but we really picked it you know in the second half and it just showed the way we were finishing in the post.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse you to the locker room and take questions for coach.

Q. This is the second time you played here and you almost got the upset. I'm sure there's no moral victories for you, but two tough games. I thought it looked like at times you were going to get this one too, tonight.

COACH MARVIN MENZIES: Yeah, it's depressing is what it is. To be able to fight that hard in the second half and get right there and then not get over the hump in over time. I just thought we drew up some really good stuff and unfortunately, we just missed some right at the basket. We had a lot of little chippers that guys normally make and like you said, this is a big stage and it's a different dynamic out there with the experience and having guys that can really step up

when they need to, like Daniel did in the second half.

So it's disappointing, but I'm really, really proud of my guys. I just told them how much I love them and what every coach says, I guess, the last game of the year. But, our Seniors and Kevin and Benzo we call Renaldo Dixon, Benzo, they're going to be great kids and great contributors to society and I think my job is done with them and now just be their friend the rest of the way.

Q. Can you talk about from that first five win season with Steve to here you're coaching against him in the NCAA tournament, just was that satisfying what that journey was like?

COACH MARVIN MENZIES: I enjoy every win that the Aztecs have, except tonight. I really feel a part of that whole journey and whew it's pretty obvious, I guess, huh?

So you know, the losing, I really wanted to bring this home for Las Cruces, you know. We have got a dynamic support system and great fans and the administration, everybody, is all on the same page. And it really helps to grow a program when you have leadership like we have and support like we have.

So, it's just amazing how much you put into something when you find a career and not a job. So when you talk about -- and that's why it hit me, because I'm thinking when I was at -- excuse me one second.

(Pause.)

I didn't think I would do this. When I was at San Diego State, I used to sleep in the office. My wife hadn't moved down yet and our heart and soul went into the dream that they're now living. So, obviously, to go from getting our butts kicked every game to turning it -- to going 20 plus wins and making the NIT and the NCAA, and just watching the recruits that I brought in flourish. That was just so rewarding, you know. When you go from program to program you leave, you don't disassociate, obviously.

So, it's just tough, man, it's tough. I knew it would be a bitter sweet loss, but I just didn't think it would be this emotional, so.

But, heck, we had a great season, man, we won, we're champions, God, this is going to be national, huh?

(Laughter.)

Q. Everybody's asleep.

COACH MARVIN MENZIES: Yeah, thank God. They got that you Tube thing going now days, don't they? So I kind of screwed up. But, hey, I love my job, man, I love being the head coach at New Mexico State, I really do. And I loved every minute I spent at San Diego, you know? So long answer to a short question.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Coach.

COACH MARVIN MENZIES: See, now you know how to get out of an interview, just cry.

(Laughter.) Thanks, you guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....