

**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 STEVE FISHER: This is our fourth ever win in the NCAA tournament. And I told our players after the game, that it doesn't matter how, it just matters, did you win. And I haven't told them this yet, but I'm so excited that we are playing on Saturday, that we're going to check into white water rafting on the Spokane River tomorrow. So, we're going to see if we can have all kind of experiences here.

We're thrilled that we won that game. And I can talk about all the things that we didn't do, but one thing we did is have more points at the end.

That's what matters now. I thought we were resilient coming out of the regulation when they hit the three to put it into overtime. We talked about it. Who are we? Who do we want to be? Are we going to put our head between our tail and say what happened and go home? Or are we going to bow our back and deliver the first punch.

And we found a way to win. And the three who are up here were immensely responsible for what happened for the success of our team tonight. So we're playing on Saturday. Very proud of that fact.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. This is really for any of you guys. In the first half you seemed sort of discombobulate them, just contesting everything. They came out in the second half, they were like a different team and so, take us through that experience of the game flipping like that.**

XAVIER THAMES: First half we came out strong, we played good defense and then in the second half they came out and hit us in the mouth a few times. So, you got to give them credit as well. They came out real strong, they played a great game, but we just can't come out like that in the next game in the second half and relax like that. But, you got to give them a lot of credit, they're a great team. So, all that matters is we got the win.

**Q. What happened in that, on that turnover with 15 seconds left? It looked like Josh through it quickly, were you shielded by Winston or not expecting the pass or what happened there?**

XAVIER THAMES: That was my fault. That was completely my fault. I took my eye off it. I thought somebody was behind me going to foul me, but nobody was near me, so that's my fault on that one. I take the blame on that.

**Q. Xavier, you and Daniel Mullings on the other team were both your conference Player of the Year, you guys were guarding each other a lot tonight. Talk about him as a player and what that matchup was like?**

XAVIER THAMES: Well, it was fun. He's a great player, we knew that coming in. We watched a lot of film on him, so it was fun going against him, but it wasn't just me and him, it was a team effort, so, but, yeah, he's a great player. He's going to do a lot of damage next year in the league and I just wish him the best.

**Q. For Skylar, you got -- you had three fouls at the half and you went a pretty long time**

**before you got your fourth, you didn't foul out. What did you do to -- how did you change your game not to foul out and did you understand how important it was in this particular game for you to be on the floor?**

SKYLAR SPENCER: I played in big games before with foul trouble, so I just know have I to play smart. Coach Fisher told me play hard, play smart, and if I had to foul, then foul. So, I think I did a pretty good job surviving throughout the whole game.

**Q. Dwayne, you guys were able to fight off being another team to be sort of quote unquote an upset. You saw these results throughout the day, I'm assuming, and what did you think going into this game? I know you were taking them seriously and everything but how did that reiterate?**

WAYNE POLEE: It's the tournament, so everybody is going to bring their best punch. So, they punched us in the mouth in the second half, but we fought back and we took it to OT and fought back even harder. So that, the result is getting the win.

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

**Q. This is the first time all season you did not post double. Can you take us through what the thinking was? Did you want it at first, did you not, and how do you think it worked out?**

COACH STEVE FISHER: And I know you guys have things to do when you leave here, but you're probably already past your deadline for tomorrow's paper, so I'm going to do something I never do, I'm going to complain about the NCAA process. And I hope somebody writes it.

We were told that we would go home tomorrow if we lost. That was what we requested. We don't want to go home tonight. It's 10 minutes after 11. By the time you get back to the hotel, did they want us to tell our kids pack your bags and if we win we'll go back? It's 10 after 11. But by the time -- and New Mexico State has to do this. They didn't want to go home either. But they have to go home tonight. It's disgraceful. For the billions of dollars that we have here, for them not to find a way to accommodate these kids, the student-athletes. You can't tell me they couldn't find charter planes. And that's what they told me.

I shouldn't have to call the NCAA and I did today, to say, why?

And then I said, we have made two charter trips on small charter planes, 14, 15, passengers. How many of those did you contact? It's disgraceful. So, we can say we want to do all these things for the benefit of the student-athletes, but you play a game like we did tonight and you get to the airport at 1 in the morning? Come on. Come on. I would like to have every, every -- go from the top up administratively, have them at a site and allow -- and say you're going to ride home with that losing team. You're going to ride home with the losing team. And see what it's like to get home at five in the morning. It shouldn't happen. It shouldn't happen.

I got all the rhetoric, we tried, we tried, money's not the issue, we tried, there's no -- you can't -- I said, well, and I don't do this. And I never do this, I never do this, this is not me. I am not a guy that looks for things to complain about. But this is not right. This should not happen. This should not happen. This should not happen. I would hope you would write it, I would hope you would investigate it and say, why did it happen? It can't happen. But it happened. Marvin Menzies and his team? They're going home tonight. They didn't want to go home tonight. Is that right? Is that fair? Come on.

And we didn't post double because of the fact that I watched them in the post double and Bhullar is so big and he passes that ball so well out of it. I wish in hindsight that we would have on Tshildzi, I wish that after awhile we would have said, okay, we're going to go on the bounce on him or done something a little different, because he was more aggressive. He got inside and created some problems for us.

But, we initially thought that they really are good, they catch it and look and they make it -- if you double them and they're good at getting out of it. And that was our worry and we thought we would give number 5 Aronis an open three and he is going to make those. So that's why.

And again, going back, I think if I could do it, if I did it again, I would have at one stretch, I would have said okay let's try the double on the bounce and see what that looks like. I didn't do a good enough job tonight either with, you know, I got caught up and I was going to get Skylar out and then I turned around and he picked up his third foul. I should have gotten him out before he got

that third foul in the first half. So, there's a lot of things that if I could do over again I would.

**Q. This is the first time there's been four OT games in one day in the tournament and you've seen a lot of tournament games. Is it surprising it's taken this long for that to happen and what does that say about the quality of the teams that are matching up now?**

COACH STEVE FISHER: If you just had us come and play and you would say, how close are these two teams to be pretty equal? A lot of these games. We're fourth seed, Marvin was a 13. I mean the talent is pretty good every where.

Then you get a little roll going and the crowd, the neutrals all cheer for the team from behind and all of a sudden they're playing a semi home game. So, we're pleased that we were able to get into overtime and win. We didn't want to get into overtime, but we're pleased once we got there that we found a way to get a win.

**Q. Did you feel the need at all to point out to your team, or were you compelled in any way to point out about the results from earlier in the day or you felt that they knew how good this team was going in anyway?**

COACH STEVE FISHER: We really didn't talk a lot about it. We said, when you get to this stage of the season, don't worry about anything other than competing as hard as you can. And don't say that because, because I'm in a white jersey, I'm the better team. You got to come out and play harder than your opposition and try to play smarter. I just -- too many good teams, the 3-point shot, and those kinds of things can get you back in the game quickly and we have all seen it. It looked like we an insurmountable lead a couple of times. The next thing you know a 13 point lead is a four point lead. A 10 point lead is a tie game. And it happens. Sometimes you say how can it happen? Just look at all these games and you'll see it happening in all of them.

**Q. Did you consider with 15 seconds left in regulation fouling or, I know you're kind of threshold I think is 10 seconds, and could you take us through the timeout when you decided to foul in overtime. Up three.**

COACH STEVE FISHER: Yes, we talked about fouling under eight seconds. And obviously, we didn't do it and I don't know, I don't know what was -- it was under eight seconds when they made the three, I know. But I think, and again it's a blur

a little bit. They missed a shot, right? Missed the shot, a little above eight seconds, kicked it out and before we could get to him he was open and he made a long three to put it in over time.

But we wanted to, we talked to them before, we're going to, when, if it gets under eight seconds, it's a little dicey when you're bringing it up and there's 17 seconds and we should have gotten the rebound and we didn't. To their credit they fought and got it and found the open guy who made a very big important shot at the time.

**Q. I want to make sure Steve, it's late, you're joking about tomorrow.**

COACH STEVE FISHER: I'm sorry?

**Q. You're joking about tomorrow.**

COACH STEVE FISHER: Yes.

**Q. But your joke was, I mean, that couldn't possibly be more exciting than what or more exhausting than what happened tonight? Is that, that was your point there?**

COACH STEVE FISHER: I don't know what my point was, it was probably a stupid thing to say. If we tried that, we would lose about three or four of them, probably a couple of coaches if they had to go too. I saw those white water rapids, those falls. And I said, look at this? I told all our team we stopped the bus and looked at it coming over to practice. Big time impressive.

(Laughter.)

**Q. What do you know about North Dakota State and comment on playing the Bison on Saturday.**

COACH STEVE FISHER: I know when they came to in that tunnel as I was finishing up talking to the team, you could hear them from the court to their locker room. They were as excited as a team could be and they should have been.

I've watched half of a game on them, but we have got two coaches that have watched three or four games, that's my job description tonight, go back and they will tell me which tape they want me to watch and without telling you that I don't know anything about them I'll know a whole lot about them tomorrow morning when the kids get up and have breakfast and we meet. I know they're a very good, a very good, very well coached basketball team that competed like crazy tonight and won a tremendous game for themselves and their

program and their school.

**Q. Your players have talked in the last week about what happened last year against Florida Gulf Coast and the Cinderella and wanting another shot at it. And here they're going to get it. North Dakota State by the way they won today is becoming a little bit of that Cinderella. Do you think they're really embracing that chance and maybe they will have learned something from last year?**

COACH STEVE FISHER: I would hope that -- obviously we'll remember what happened last year and it will be written. Florida Gulf Coast got on a run last year where they were as good as just about anybody in the country. They played phenomenal. And they were a 15 seed.

We're playing a 12 seed tomorrow. We played a 13 seed tonight and hung on to win.

Had we played Oklahoma, we would have known we're going to have to play and play really good basketball to be in Anaheim. And we're going to have to do that against this team. I don't think they care that they're a 12 seed and that we're a 4 seed. They are going to come out guns a blazing and we need to make sure that we do the same thing.

Without knowing anything about them, I know they will play hard and I know we'll play hard, so it should be a really, really, really good basketball game on Saturday afternoon.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, coach.

COACH STEVE FISHER: Thank you.

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