

2017 Big West Men's Basketball Tournament

Game 14 - Finals Quotes

Final - No. 2 UC Davis def. No. 1 UC Irvine, 50-47

No. 2 UC Davis

Head Coach Jim Les -

(Opening statement) "Couldn't be more excited for this group of young men who have been a joy to coach, who have allowed us to push them, to challenge them. These guys, for these three games, were dominant for these three games. We weren't always pretty offensively, but our defense won. Couldn't be more proud. Defense is underrated, overlooked. But, they brought their hard-hat everyday."

(On making NCAA tournament first time in history) "That's been a goal of ours. We've talked about within our program, within our staff, a lot of firsts. The first step was winning a Big West championship a couple years ago and that group laid a foundation of the hard work and the attention to detail you need to have to be successful at the Division-I level. A lot of these guys were apart of that team and they had secondary roles but they learned a lot about what it takes to be successful not only as a Division-I basketball player, but what it takes to be successful in life. We set out this year, not to win X amount of games, but just to trust and buy into the process and be the best we can be everyday and challenge each other to reach our potential, and I thought this group had a high ceiling for their potential. It wasn't always easy, we had struggles in the non-conference that weren't very good, we come off a 30-points loss and everybody was questioning who we were and did we deserve a second place finish in our record and anytime these guys have been challenged they really step up and bond together. They bought into defense and defense wins championships as far as I'm concerned."

(On bench production being a huge factor and mixing up lineups) "Last night we didn't get out of here until about 12:30. If you would have seen the way our guys walked into the hotel after last night's overtime game and that battle, I wasn't quite sure what we were going to have in the tank today. We spent the majority of the day with recovery tactics and making sure they were eating right and getting good stretches in and plenty fluids but we as a staff went to our bench and said, 'we are going to need you tonight.' Some of those guys hadn't played in a few games and we said, you guys need to buy us some minutes and come in and play confidently, and do it on the defensive end, do it making hustle plays and those guys gave us an unbelievable life and let us rest our starters who played heavy minutes last night so they could make the stretch run in the second half. Big credit for this championship goes to those bench players who really stepped up."

Junior forward Chima Moneke -

(On how it feels to beat Irvine after losing last week by 30) "I didn't want anyone else [in this championship game], I knew we could beat them. After they beat us the second time people forgot that we beat them earlier in the year which was really disappointing but it's good. The fans at the end of that game were cheering things we didn't like, we remembered, we took it to heart and we took it personally. Coach challenged us, and we challenged each other to be better and 47 points defensively, can't be much better than that."

(On what was they key to stopping Luke Nelson) "Coach made a couple changes in terms of personnel and who's guarding him and we just flew to the ball whenever he had the ball and he's a great player, a great scorer. We just made it tough for him, we just had bodies, we didn't let him get any easy catches, easy touches and coach did a good job of that."

Senior guard Brynton Lemar -

(On being aggressive in final four minutes of the game) "When we went pick-and-roll situations the bigs were sitting back and our coach preached all day to attack. That's why we attack, for myself, attack for others, get wide open shots. I wanted to take it to them and try to make a play. The last four minutes we knew we had to get stops. We knew that they are an explosive offensive team and our defense gave us a chance to stay in the game and that was the biggest thing. Whether our shots are falling or not, we have to be consistent on defense, and in the last four minutes, our defense ramped up."

(On talking back and forth with Nelson in final moments of the game) "It was great. I told him, 'I work too hard for this, I'm not going to let this slip out,' and he said, 'alright, let's see it.' I took it as a challenge and I love challenges and I'm not going to back down from anybody, I don't care who it is. My teammates had my back and it was just a great experience."

No.1 UC Irvine

Head Coach Russell Turner -

(Opening statement) "Congratulations to UC Davis for a hard fought win, really impressed with their senior class especially and their coaching staff, the way they've developed winning character. Happy for the m, disappointed for us. We didn't play our best game I don't think, but a lot of that has to do with Davis. The guys in my locker room are disappointed in our inability to finish the game."

(On last four minutes) "I feel like our team is a team of closers with experience and I expected at that point that we'd be able to win. Typically, we've been able to defend in those situations, today we weren't able to do that. Given the way the game was played, I felt like we got some tough breaks in the end. As painful as it is, the level of hurt you feel is correlated to the passion you have for what you do. Our guys laid it out there. We wanted it to be easier than Davis made it, and that's why we played so poorly early. We didn't play well. In the second half I thought we would steady ourselves. When we were up with four minutes I thought we'd close the game but we weren't able to do that."

(On 13 turnovers) "They were physical, they were aggressive, the way that championship basketball is often played. I give them credit for that. I thought that in addition to the 13 turnovers we had really bad shots, hurried, rushed. We didn't play very well on offense. I thought we'd be able to come back in the game. Thought we had a good session at halftime, gathered ourselves well. Chipped away at the lead we had given up, got back in the game and gave ourselves a chance to win. We didn't handle the ball well. We had a couple offensive fouls."

(On NIT) "It's hard to feel as excited as maybe one should with an opportunity to play in the NIT. I know that that's a great tournament. We played in it once here at Irvine and it's a great experience. What I hope is that our guys, and I know we will, appreciate the opportunity to play again. That's what you have to do when you risk everything and come up short. Be men, gather yourselves, and get ready to go again."