



2018 Big West Men's Basketball Tournament

Presented by MemorialCare

Game 14 - Finals Quotes

Final - No. 4 Cal State Fullerton def. No. 3 UC Irvine, 71-55



No. 4 Cal State Fullerton

Head Coach Dedrique Taylor -

(Opening statement) "God is good. I don't know what more to say other than that. This group of guys had an unbelievable accomplishment. They picked the right game to play their best basketball by far on so many different levels. Most importantly, the competitive spirit that we needed, the togetherness, the unselfishness that these guys displayed makes it hard for me to put into words how proud I am of this group. Validation and accomplishment that's what this win means to me. All the hard work that these guys have put in has been validated and it is one of the greatest accomplishments for everyone involved in this program and I am extremely proud to be a part of it."

(On program turnaround) "It has been surreal. When I interviewed and I told them I felt that this job was my destiny, this job had my name on it for so many different reasons. I'm from here, a bunch of my friends and family are alumni, and I just felt like it was the right time and I was the right guy. They believed that and it goes back to a sense of validation for that committee that hired me because that day means so much to me, it is etched in my memory. For us to be able to sit here as Big West tournament champs and going to the NCAA tournament leaves me speechless."

(On team playing to full potential) "We picked our right game to play our best. All of the trials and tribulations we went through during conference allowed us to be on point and on task tonight. Tonight showed when we are clicking on all cylinders we could be a dangerous team and a lot of coaches in this league knew that and we finally showed how good we really can be."

(On Kyle Allman, Jr.'s and Khalil Ahmad's performance) "You have to admire their work ethic because just three years ago those two guys were logging a lot of minutes because our program was depleted. We had so much adversity with injuries, off the court issues and those guys stayed the course. Their maturity and most significantly their work ethic was ramped up every summer, every spring. And what we saw out there tonight was a byproduct of their hard work everyday."

(On where this team was a year ago to now) "It was a contract year for me but I never felt the pressure. I just knew every day that I was blessed to open my eyes and that there was work that had to be done. So every day I grabbed my lunch pale and my hard helmet and I went to work and soon everyone bought in. We all knew we had enough talent but we were missing some intangibles like work ethic and maturity but to sit here tonight and see our talent play hard, finally work at the level they are capable of and so unselfish, the most I've seen our group be, and the end result was just five turnovers."

(On prep for NCAA Tournament) "Very similar to what we did tonight. First and foremost we can't play with emotion it has to be passion because emotion eventually wears off. The second thing is to attach ourselves mentally to something very, very simple and just do that. And once you get into a rhythm add one thing to it and continue to expand and over the course of the game you will like where you are."

Junior Forward Kyle Allman, Jr. -

(On big night in championship game) "I knew I had to play well so there was no pressure. I just played my game. My coach set me up to have success so I feed off that energy and made my shots."

(On winning Tournament MVP) "I worked super hard to get this. I was a little down to not get player of the year so this made up for that a little bit."

(On culture change) "We came a long way and we knew that when the time comes we would have to be leaders and lead the young guys how we were lead. We just tried to lead the program in the right way and now we are here."

Junior Guard Khalil Ahmad -

(On second half performance) "My teammates and coaches gave me confidence to keep shooting and to stay aggressive and do the little things and the game will come."

(On strategy against UCI) "Everything just clicked, offensively, defensively. We played well together and on defense we kept getting stops after stops and everything worked out."

(On culture change) "We knew we had to lead on and off the court with our actions and it feels like our culture has changed. There's almost no time when you go into the gym and not see one of us in there always trying to get better because we are always so hungry."

No. 3 UC Irvine

Head Coach Russell Turner -

(Opening statement) "Tough night for our team, my guys and I give credit to Cal State Fullerton for that. They were terrific and deserved the win with the performance that they had. I thought that Kyle [Allman Jr.] in the first half had a dominant performance and Khalil [Ahmad] had that in the second half. They were good; not just on the offensive end but I thought their defense against our team was excellent. Give their coaching staff and program credit for an outstanding performance. They were the deserving champs."

(On it slipping away in the second half) "I didn't feel like it was slipping away. Our team has character. We didn't lose any contact. We kept it around a 10-point game. There wasn't any lack of belief on our part to get back into the game. The difficult shots that Allman and Ahmad made against a pretty good defense were the difference. They made those on a good run on a number of possessions in a row that were able to spread the game and dictate it so credit to them. Sometimes in basketball, good offense beats a good defense and those two guys tonight did that."

(On emotions after loss) "We're going to use this loss as fuel and continue to get better. I could not be any prouder of the guys on my team, the guys on my staff with the way we've represented this university, with the way that we've played, with the way that we've carried ourselves. As positive parts of the community at UC Irvine, all that stuff is meaningful. We all came into this game believing we were going to have success and Fullerton was competitive tonight than we were. Again they were better on offense and their defensive game plan and execution was outstanding. It affected our decision-making and we never looked like a confident team on the floor. We'll learn from the things that they did that made us not as effective...nobody in the league has been able to defend us and dictate on defense the way Fullerton was able to do tonight over and over again so give them credit."

Sophomore Guard Evan Leonard -

(On learning experience) "We grew up a lot especially during these three days, during the whole season. This was good for us; we lost but this in some way a learning lesson that can allow us to take what we learned from this game and work on what we need to work on in the summer. We're going to continue to pull together, continue to get better and we'll be back."