

2015 Big West Men's Basketball Tournament

Game 14 - Finals Quotes

Final - No. 3 UC Irvine def. No. 5 Hawai'i, 67-58

No. 2 UC Irvine

Head Coach Russell Turner -

(Opening statement)

"Really satisfied and excited for our program and the UCI community to have this experience. Our players have all been recruited here to leave a mark on the community and tonight we did that. Winning changes people, it can change schools and that's what we hope to do, have a positive impact. I hope we can get over the idea that we can't do it here, we obviously can. Reflecting just on tonight, I'm incredibly proud of my players and my staff. We had a game plan and we stayed with it when it didn't look good. We forged a bond and became champions, and that's fun."

(On Travis Souza)

"Our seniors, Travis [Souza] is a young man who I recruited without having seen him play live and in person. He struck me someone kind of like me, he was overlooked. He was competitive and wanted badly to accomplish something like we did tonight. An incredible captain and an unselfish player and tonight as he always is, he was clutch. Some players are winning players and Travis clearly is a winning player."

(On Will Davis II)

"He's going to go down as one of the best players in our history. No one can dispute that. He stayed in the game and really delivered in the second half when we really needed him to. He's gotten better and better every year. He's one of the most exiting college basketball players we've ever seen here."

(On Luke Nelson)

"He's endured a lot of adversity this season. I recruited him because of nights we had like tonight. And plays he made tonight."

(On game plan)

"They got off to a great start. Our zone has been pretty good at preventing threes and that hasn't been Hawaii's strength. I was confident that if we raised our defensive level a little bit, we could make them miss the same shots they had made. I give Benji [Taylor] great credit for what they've done this year, they're disruptive, they're very difficult to play. He's done an outstanding job building that team and they're young. It isn't easy to take care of the ball against Hawaii. We focused on the right things and we made enough offensive plays in the 2nd half to pull ahead."

(On NCAA matchup thoughts)

"It doesn't matter. We're looking forward to the opportunity to compete. Our team will be confident that we can compete."

"I look forward to tomorrow and getting ready for our next experience. We've got to get rested, but we've go to get ready to play. They've grown up watching the NCAA Tournament and they know that teams like us can accomplish great things."

Forward Will Davis II -

(On why this postseason was different from previous years)

"When we got here my sophomore year we had the mindset that we were going to win everything, then we realized that it wasn't that easy. Last year we had the same mindset. This year, I felt like we had to make it, it's my senior year, there's no other option. We came out and played out hearts out every night and we came out victorious."

(On second half versus first half)

"In the first half I felt like they got off to such a hot start. I was just telling our team that we've just got to keep playing our defense, they can't keep up that pace the while time. I only had two points in the first half but my teammates were hitting their shots. When the second half started we just wanted to keep the momentum going and not let them get off to such a hot start."

Guard Luke Nelson -

(On being the first team at UCI to advance to NCAA Tournament)

"I came here with that as my goal. We were close last year. That was one of the things that drew me here, knowing I could be a part of history. That was what really drew me to Irvine."

Guard Travis Souza -

(On winning the Big West Tournament)

"It's unbelievable. Knowing we're the first team to do it is incredible. We know what that heart break felt like. And we know the other side now, it's a phenomenal feeling."

No. 5 Hawai'i

Head Coach Benji Taylor -

(Opening statement)

"First of all my hat is off to Irvine, they are a very good ball club and very well coached. They have been in the league for awhile and in order to get here you have to play pretty good teams. We were 8-10 minutes away from finishing it but we will get better and we will come back."

(Where did you feel the game turned)

"I think before we got to the last 10 minutes, when we started the second half, we only shot 32 percent but we had really good looks. We kept fighting and kept digging, we didn't get stops that we needed to and they made a majority of their free throws down the stretch. We did a good job for the most part against their zone, but we just needed to have a little more patience."

(13-point lead loss)

"It was a grind of a game, we didn't make enough plays to win it. We have been making up plays all year on both ends of the floor and we came up a little short tonight. It is a game of runs, they made their run at the right time. We had to go small tonight and we need to work on our interior presence a little bit, but we are young, we will get better."

Guard Garrett Nevels -

(Thoughts and emotion after the game)

"Of course I wanted to go to the tournament and win the championship, but at the same time, we had a 22-win season. No one expected us to be here, but we stuck together as a team and made it this far and had a great season."

Guard Aaron Valdes -

(Guarding Mamadou Ndiaye)

"Those guys did a good job holding him to only eight points and a few rebounds. It was a good game plan going in, we executed it well."