



2007 State Farm Missouri  
Valley Conference Tournament  
Game Four Press Conference  
March 2  
St. Louis, Mo.

Bradley Head Coach Jim Les and  
Student-Athlete Quotes

Jim Les

Opening Statement: That's everything I expected out of a 4-5 game, and that was a heck of a basketball team that we played, and I thought we played outstanding. For a week we've been talking about the defensive end of the floor, and these guys get a lot of publicity about their offense and numbers and all the things they do offensively and the number of points they score. When they lock in, they're an awfully good defensive team. I was never good at math. I put 70 on the board before the game, to hold them under 70 because we didn't do that the last two games. I probably should have put 50, I guess. It was a great team effort, will with a big shot. Can't say enough about J.J.'s shot to tie it up. There was just big stops and big plays. This is a lot of fun, this group, to coach, and I'm just enjoying the ride that they're taking me on.

**MEDIA:** Will, where would you say that that three-point shot with 1.7 seconds left ranks among shots in your college career.

**WILL FRANKLIN:** I would say that's my biggest one. I'm just glad to -- until tomorrow, maybe. I'm glad to get the opportunity that Coach has faith in me to give any the ball for a last second shot. I want to just give it the best shot I can.

**MEDIA:** Will, can you take us through the possession, what you were trying to do and what happened?

**WILL FRANKLIN:** I just tried to let the time go down. I mean, I tried not to get the opponent a chance to shoot the ball, so I was just waiting. It was just me and the defender. Just tried to blow by him at first. I kind of lost the ball but was able to get a good shot up. I was able to get my follow-through, and it just went down.

**MEDIA:** J.J., you were on Stout quite a bit today. Did you do anything differently with him this time around?

**J.J. TAUAI:** We put in a doubling system, and basically we just want to make his catches tough. If we can push him on the block, make him further away from the basket, that was the idea. He got in a little bit of foul trouble, but I think it worked out for us.

**MEDIA:** Jeremy, a couple things. First of all, you guys defensively, you were really getting after it, you know, from the beginning, and the first time you got -- the first two times against them, they were hitting the 3s. You seem like you were defending the perimeter a lot more. Can you describe your perimeter defense?

**JEREMY CROUCH:** Coach really challenged us after the last game. A lot of us guards were pretty disappointed in the way we guarded last time. We really wanted to put pressure on them and to -- to really guard them and make them do things they don't want to do. Coach talked a lot about, you know, we kind of talked about them being an inside team, but we let the guards do a lot last time. We really just wanted to focus in on doing our parts and helping the bigs because they've got two big guys that really play well.

**MEDIA:** Jeremy, talk a little about playing Stout again and playing well against him at Peoria.

**JEREMY CROUCH:** It's something we really wanted to take care of, this one. Now this one's over, you know, there's always the next game tomorrow in this tournament, and you know, they're getting a lot of recognition for what they're doing. They deserve all of it. They're a very good basketball team, but the biggest thing we have to do is guard them. That's something we did at our place and I don't think we really did that at their place. That's going to be the number one focus for us going forward tomorrow.

**MEDIA:** This is for J.J. Does this cement your NCAA tournament bid?

**J.J. TAUAI:** We don't worry too much about that. We'll just take care of business on the court, and we let whoever decides that deal with that.

**MEDIA:** J.J., I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how the season and even throughout your career you've deferred on the offensive end because you've got such good teammates. In this game you kind of stepped up and came to the basket. Was that a matchup thing, or did you just decide to do it?

**J.J. TAUAI:** I got a lot of open lanes. I got a nice pass to start the game and after that it snowballed to a lot of lanes. Their matchup was on me from the offensive end.

**MEDIA:** J.J., on your basket that tied the game, it looked like Coleman blocked it right back to you. Were you surprised it came right back to your hands? How were you able to react so fast to that?

**J.J. TAUAI:** I was surprised. He has long arms. I thought I got it over him but he tipped it right back to me. I saw him stepping off a bit and kind of shot it before he had a chance to recover and block again.

**COACH JIM LES:** My kindergartner has a project this weekend. We have to take Butterscotch wherever we go. We didn't want Butterscotch to miss the press conference. I'm trying to get my kindergartner an A. I would appreciate if someone would take a picture of it. Hopefully the kindergarten teacher is watching.

**MEDIA:** Danny, I guess, in preparing for these guys, obviously they kind of had your number the first two games. Can you kind of describe your emotion now, being able to get in this time around.

**DANNY ADAMS:** We're really excited coming off great win. Like everybody else is talking about, you've got to get back to -- there's no rest. You've got to come back tonight, watch film, get focused. It's a very good ball team we're playing tomorrow, one of the top-ranked teams in the nations. We've played them already twice and we got them one time but they got us the other time. It's a very good ball team that we're going up against tomorrow. We've got to stay focused and stick to our game plan and play within ourselves.

**MEDIA:** Did you tell Will to do his best Dion Jackson imitation on that shot, to lose the ball and get it and shoot?

**COACH JIM LES:** Well, it didn't quite show up the way we drew it up, but I've got tremendous confidence in him. You've seen us practice, and we work on situations. Through the course of the year guys step up in those situations, and it starts in practice, and Will is a guy that likes the ball in his hands. Even though, you know, he was struggling a little bit with his shot, he's got a lot of confidence in himself. I've got a ton of confidence in him, and it wasn't quite picture-perfect in terms of him fumbling it, but you know, if he gets a decent look in that situation, you know, he's got ice water in his veins, and you know, I'll live and die by him taking our last shot, you know, night in and night out. We'll be in pretty good shape.

**MEDIA:** Same question I asked J.J. What do you think this does for your NCAA tournament aspirations?

**COACH JIM LES:** Well, I think he's right, you know. We're just happy to have the challenge tomorrow to play an awfully good Southern team, a ranked team in the country, and you know, we're just -- we're trying to do what we can do and control what we can control which is how we play, how we approach the game, how we prepare, and just laying it on the line, and I'd be hard pressed not to say, though, that I think this is one of the top 65 teams in the country by what these guys have done throughout the year and what they continue to do, and I'd love for them to get another chance to get back in that tournament. I think they proved last year they belong, and I believe they belong again.

**MEDIA:** Your defense seemed to set the tone right from the beginning. You were getting good help side. Can you kind of just take us through obviously that was an important consideration coming into today to play better defense?

**COACH JIM LES:** Well, we spent all week and we spent very little time talking about offense, and we just talk about our defense. We showed them on tape, and I know they didn't like it because a lot of the video was -- I thought some of our breakdowns defensively in the last two games. This group has a lot of pride. Like I said, we talked about this game will be won and lost on the defensive end. If we allow them to score 70 points again, I thought we were going to have a tough time winning the game. They set the tone right off the tip in terms of their approach and they were aggressive, they were helping each other, and the double downs in the post I thought were just, you know, unbelievable in terms of the timing that they had. That's hard to simulate because those guys are very good players and we don't have very many big guys. Just a great team defensive effort and just enough points to get over the hump.

**MEDIA:** Jim, what was the thought with going with five smaller guys on the last possession and not having a big guy inside?

**COACH JIM LES:** Well, it was -- they needed a 3, and we just tried to make sure we had guys mobile enough, yet I wanted to have a big body in Matt on the floor just in case Stout got a 3 and to contest, and we kind of play it as a defensive backfield with a free safety, and a couple other ways we do it, maybe a guy on the ball, decide to go off the ball, having a roving free safety who is reading the quarterback's eyes and making a play on the ball, trying to get a deflection.

**MEDIA:** Coach, what are the keys to tomorrow's game?

**COACH JIM LES:** You just don't want me to take any time to enjoy this, do you? Well, you know, I think again for us, it's defense. I know for Southern it's defense, so that's going to be a very physical tough, hard-nosed basketball game. I think we were able to beat them at our place in a low-scoring game because of our defense. In Carbondale we let them get away from us offensively because I didn't think we guarded very well. They can frustrate you offensively. I thought we carried that frustration from offense to defense and weren't executing as well, so I think it will be, you know, we'll lock in on defense tonight and tomorrow and you know, we're just going to try and score when we can against them because we know how good they are defensively, but our defense has gotta keep us in the game tomorrow.

**MEDIA:** Coach, did you say anything to Will on the floor after he hit the three-point shot?

**COACH JIM LES:** Yeah. I said get in the huddle because there's time left. Let's not get too excited, but we -- we didn't talk about anything other than the defensive possession, but you know, after the game I just told him, I said you're money, and you're my guy, and I'll go back to you at any time.

**MEDIA:** Jim, I think when Reed asked about the five little guys, on your final offensive possession.

**COACH JIM LES:** Offensive, I'm sorry.

**MEDIA:** Your two big guys didn't score all day.

**COACH JIM LES:** First of all, I wanted the last shot, and I was concerned about spreading the floor, and I wanted to get some driving lanes, and what they were doing off maybe our non-three-point shooters was really helping in the lane. I wanted to just give some space to our drivers in particular Will at the end, and if he couldn't pull up and hit the shot, maybe he would have an opportunity to get to the basket and spread the floor. They really had to honor all the guys we had on the floor offensively. You know, our big guys understand we're a guard-oriented team. That doesn't mean we go into a game saying you're not going to score, but the opportunities weren't there. What I'm most proud about with those guys is they don't get frustrated. They know that this game's going to be won defensively, and I thought they expended a lot of energy guarding and really made catches tough for Coleman and Stout. Our double teams were more effective because they made them catch the ball out on the floor and not as deep. If those guys catch deep in the paint, I don't care what you do, they're going to score, and they expended so much energy. Maybe that took away a little bit of their offense, too, but it was a great approach by them.

# UNI Head Coach Ben Jacobson and Student-Athlete Quotes

## Ben Jacobson

Opening Statement: Thank you. Well, I'd like to congratulate Bradley on the way they played today. I thought the game was, you know, now that the last two minutes played out, it was decided in the first six or seven minutes, and that's to Bradley's credit. They deserve a lot of credit for the way they started that basketball game, so I'd like to congratulate their coaching staff and their players on the way they came out, and for six or seven minutes they controlled the basketball game, and they gave themselves enough of a cushion to, you know, to hold on after we got going a little bit, so just dug a little bit too deep a hole.

**MEDIA:** Brooks, can you describe how Bradley defended you differently today than the first two games?

**BROOKS McKOWEN:** I don't know if they necessarily defended us different. We know when we come in and play Bradley that they're going to put a lot of ball pressure on you and they're going to show hard on the screen and do a lot of the things. They don't change their defense. They just do what they do well. They played a very good basketball game and didn't let us get to some of the stuff that we wanted to, and they came out on top.

**MEDIA:** Grant, can you talk about what went through your head on that final play on Franklin's shot that went in when it went in.

**GRANT STOUT:** I was on the ground behind him, you know. I was just hoping that he didn't get a shot off, but I didn't want to see it go in the hoop, you know. I was just hoping we had enough time, but unfortunately we didn't.

**MEDIA:** Brooks, on the Franklin shot, could you guys have played that any better? It was great defense by Jared. He actually got the ball away from him. Also with the shot that Eric block on J.J. at the end, it bounced the other way.

**BROOKS McKOWEN:** We really stepped it up at the end. Defensively we made a very good play on J.J. Tauai. He got the ball back. To J.J.'s credit, he stayed with it and he finished the play. Franklin hit a tough shot at the end of the game, and they deserve the win. He's going to make shots like that, and Jared did a good job defending him and he stepped up and hit it.

**MEDIA:** Brooks, talk about that last full offensive possession you guys had and what you were kind of hoping to get out of that possession.

**BROOKS McKOWEN:** We were trying to get the ball inside. We wanted to get it in to Grant or Eric because they've been playing well and they've been doing good inside. Bradley was struggling on stopping us on the inside. We got it into Eric and he kicked it out and we reversed the ball. We just tried to set a screen up top and had an open look and just missed it.

**MEDIA:** Brooks, what happened on the double technical foul with you and Ruffin?

**BROOKS McKOWEN:** I don't know. No comment on that. I mean, that was just a call they made. I don't really know what happened.

**MEDIA:** Brooks, you've had several games, especially late in the game where you guys have had to battle from behind most of the way. Again today when you guys did get over the hump, did you feel like maybe this one was going to be different than some of the others?

**BROOKS McKOWEN:** Yeah. We know if a team's going to make shots, and we knew coming into this game that Bradley was going to make shots and go on their runs. We knew we had to stick in there and go on our runs like we've done all year. We went on that run and took the lead, and we had a shot to go up on them with under a minute left, so you know, we were in good position. Our team has always fought back all year. Our guys play really hard, and we never give up. It just didn't turn out our way this game.

**MEDIA:** If you could both answer this, you guys are part of probably the most successful four-year run in Northern Iowa basketball history. Can you talk about what your four years has been like and just kind of give us a synopsis on how it's been?

**GRANT STOUT:** You know, it's been great. I'm sure Brooks is the same way when he first committed to come here. We never would have expected to have this much success, you know, making the tournament right away, you know, and it's been a great four years. We created a lot of friendships. I've played with a bunch of great guys, and we still hang out and talk to them all the time. It's just those little things that, you know, kind of take for granted as you're doing it, and you've finally got to realize that people move on, I guess, but everything's been -- it's been great. Unfortunately this year, you know, we've struggled a little bit.

**BROOKS McKOWEN:** The last four years have been pretty good for us. We've been successful as a program, and our program has made a lot of leaps forward. It's nice to be a part of that. It's going to be good when we get older to look back at it and see the things we've accomplished as a program and as players, you know. This year has been up and down for us, but we don't believe that it's over for us yet. We hope we get into the NIT and continue to play.

**MEDIA:** Grant, you had a couple of big shots there in the second half when you guys were making the run, a few 3s and some good inside plays. Were you trying to put the team on your back and create more of a presence offensively?

**GRANT STOUT:** I don't know. I was just getting an open look and I had to shoot it. I got a few of them to go in, so I don't know what -- it wasn't really anything different. It was just we were trying to get the ball inside the whole game, and you know, then their double team was less toward the end so we didn't have open 3s. It just created opportunities.

**MEDIA:** Ben, how did they defend you differently between the beginning of the game when it seemed you were getting 2 and 3 point shooters this time?

**BEN JACOBSON:** They were just a little more aggressive. I think they just tried to put a little more pressure on, and they were aggressive in the post, you know. I just think they were just a little bit more aggressive defensively. I don't know that they changed a lot of things, but it just felt like they were a little bit more aggressive, and you know, they took the first shot of the basketball game in terms of, you know, kind of punching us in the chest and saying okay, this is going to be a hard game. Let's find out where you guys stand, you know. We've done a pretty good job of being able to either make that first statement or respond to it a little bit better. We've had two or three games where we haven't, but tonight Bradley, they made the first statement, and they got themselves a nice lead.

**MEDIA:** Coach, can you talk about what they were able to do with Eric this time? It seemed like they had him frustrated early and sort of took him out as a factor.

**COACH BEN JACOBSON:** They defended him the same way, ran guys at him, doubled him, but we've seen that enough. By this time of the year teams have doubled Grant and Eric all ways imaginable, so you know, we've seen it. Eric's seen it before, you know. It was one of those situations where I think Eric really wanted to -- really wanted to get his team off to a good start, you know, no more than that. He really wanted to get our team off to a good start today, and he got -- he was able to get through a double team once and take a little bit of a tough shot, but he just wanted to get our team off to a good start and I don't fault him for that. We've seen that double team, you know, the way it happened tonight. We've seen it a lot this year.

**MEDIA:** Jake, can you talk about you're up two, you get the the ball back after Grant's 3. Did you run a clear for Adam, or was that just a play that happened where he tried to jump in and draw the foul where Andrews got for the travel.

**COACH BEN JACOBSON:** For Jared.

**MEDIA:** Was that a set play to clear out?

**COACH BEN JACOBSON:** That's a play we've run quite a bit. It's something we run if our initial action doesn't work or sometimes we just come down and run that and give it. The way Jared had played, we felt very good about putting it in his hands and seeing if we couldn't get him to turn the corner. He got the corner turned. Boy, I wish he would have kept his feet still because Andrews would have landed on top of him. He made the right play, he just shuffled his feet a little bit. If he could have kept his feet still, he would have gone to the line and we would have gone up 4. We like that play and we really like the way Jared was playing. He made a good play. He just needed to keep his feet still.

**MEDIA:** Coach, were you pleased with the way you defended the Franklin situation, the last shot? Did you figure he was going to get the ball and were you pleased with the way you guys handled that situation?

**COACH BEN JACOBSON:** Yeah. You know, Jared has been absolutely terrific this year defensively, and he's done an unbelievable job. We've put him on the other team's best player every -- every night, and he has done a great job. In that situation, their best offensive guy in terms of creating a shot, they had it with Franklin, and we had our best defender on him, and I thought Jared made a great play. Got a hand on it, knocked it loose, and you know, you hope that ball goes a little farther or it bounces to one of our guys because Jared made a great play. He guarded, and he got a deflection and he got the ball and got the ball loose, and Franklin, that's a tough shot to pick it up off the ground and go right into your shot. That's a tough shot. I thought Jared defended it great, and give Franklin credit that he found a way to make a tough shot.

**MEDIA:** Coach, this may not be the last chapter for Brooks and Grant, but could you talk about what you'd like their legacy to be here in this 4 years in perspective.

**COACH BEN JACOBSON:** Boy. It's been pretty amazing, pretty remarkable what those two guys have been a part of. You know, before they got to campus, you know, when Mac got the job, the two years they played before they got to campus, we had a lot of work to do, and we had started that before Brooks and Grant got to campus, but from the day they arrived, getting the automatic bid their freshman year coming down here and winning three games and getting the wins back to back years and this year jumping off to a great start, we've got a good basketball team again this year in large part due to those two guys, so you know, they've had four great years. I think one of the things that gets overlooked a little bit is how hard it is to get an at large bid. There aren't very many of them out there. For Brooks and Grant to be a part of two teams at Northern Iowa that got at large bids is -- that's a real accomplishment and a real credit to what those guys have meant to our program, but in terms of their basketball accomplishments, it's been fun. They've got a lot of things they can look back at and smile about, but you know, they're good kids. They go to class, and they treat their teammates the right way, and they had to be leaders for us this year and they had big shoes to fill when Ben Jacobson and Erik Crawford and John Little leave, those guys are able to do it. I think mostly they'll be remembered for that, the type of young guys that those two guys are. They're absolutely terrific, and they deserve all the success that they've had.

**MEDIA:** Do you feel your team belongs in the NIT?

**COACH BEN JACOBSON:** I was hoping somebody would ask that. Yes, I do. If you look at what we've done this year and some of it happened, you know, some of it happened early, but it's hard to say early when it's February 1st, you know. We did it for the better part of the season. We had a two and a half week stretch where we didn't play great. We happened to have a bunch of games in that stretch, and a couple of them we lost. We lost to Missouri State who is probably going to the NCAA tournament. We lose at Creighton who is going to the NCAA tournament. We lost at Nevada who is going to the NCAA tournament. Those are losses to three teams going to the NCAA tournament. Against Missouri State we've got a chance to go up 1 on them at the minute left. We're up 1 at Nevada at halftime. Even though we lost some games in that two and a half week stretch, we still played good basketball. You look at what these guys were able to do, you win at Iowa for the first time. We went out and won at Bucknell, and we had some great conference wins, two at Wichita and one at Missouri State, one at Bradley. Those are good wins. The win over Southern Illinois, so I hope so. To finish fifth in this league this year is hard. Our league is great from top to bottom this year, the best it's been, so to finish fifth and have some good wins like we do, I hope that we do. I hope Brooks and Grant get a chance to take one more trip and put the uniform on one more time.