



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Women's Soccer Press Conference November 7, 2017

SDSU head coach Mike Friesen

Opening Statement:

"We're obviously pretty excited to be back in the NCAA tournament and going to a very familiar place at UCLA but we're excited to see the progress we've made since the first game of the season. We feel like we've played our best soccer in the last half of the season and we're excited also that we're probably the most healthy we've been in about five years at the end of a season so we just feel like we're in a good spot to go see where we're at."

On the run senior forward Aliyah Utush has been on:

"It's pretty special to see a senior who has meant so much to our program and had a ton of success through all four years, but struggle midseason to find goals and then literally in the last three to four weeks to have seven goals is a pretty special performance and I think it's a testament to her not being at the end of her career like a lot of other female athletes get to this point and go, 'well I've got a next chapter coming', but really to want to finish strong. That's a testament to her character as with all the other seniors and women in our program that have pushed towards the end of the season here because it's an easy thing as a college athlete mid-season when it's not going the way you want it to go to phone it in and they've done a great job of creating momentum and obviously it's not just Aliyah, it's been a whole team thing. But it's been a pretty fun run towards the end here."

On UCLA beating them 5-0 earlier in the season:

"First of all, UCLA is a special team, and you took a goal away from us. We did score a goal. It was 5-1. One of the things we talked about right after the game was, I was really proud of how we played. We've had games with them over the years where they have just been the better team and that is probably going to be the case again this year in terms of talent on the field. But in terms of our performance on that first game I thought we played very well. They had some world class goals to be fair to open it up and we had a couple of mistakes at the very end so we'll certainly be under a lot of pressure with them. We feel like this is an opportunity for us. We've been there this year, we've played well this year, we created chances – we didn't finish some of the chances, we had a chance to go up 1-0, we had a chance to tie it up 1-1 – so we feel like this is an opportunity and I think one of the things we're going to talk about all week is I think the NCAA really wants us to beat them which is why they keep putting us there."

On the difference between upper echelon women's soccer programs and the Aztecs:

"It's \$20 million a year in TV money. The reality of it is, there is a big gap in terms of what they are getting every year to promote their teams and do all those things. You look at teams that are spending \$30,000 a year on a photo shoot and I'm taking

our team picture, but the reality is that there is still a ball we have, a field we have, and players. UCLA had done a fantastic job of putting themselves in a position to have the 19 national team kids that they have on their team, but that is in our sport only a part of it. This is a team game and I think that is one of the things that makes it interesting about college athletics in general is that there is some separation in terms of financial support that happens between our universities and it goes the other way too. We're better off than a lot of places so really what it comes down to is going to be a team performance. If it is an individual on paper, they are probably going to win this game because they do have kids that have played at such a high level from top to bottom. But I think we have a team that is willing to work as a team that is very close. I think that has been one of the things that has been a strength this year in one of the more fun groups I've had the privilege to coach just in the way they interact and the way they believe in themselves. Really at the end of the day, there is a separation in terms of the kids they get but we're going to see too where we are at the end of the season. You saw where we were to start, we're going to see where we are to finish which is the most important piece."

On to what he attributes his team's success at the Mountain West Tournament:

"Part of it is just experience. We've had (defender) Sarah Broacha as a freshman, her first touch as a college player was a nutmeg, randomly, but I think she's grown a bunch over the year. She's very athletic. (Senior defender) Stacie (Moran) has just been rock solid for four years. I've said this 100 times but I think she's the best player in our conference and she's just gotten better throughout the year. And (senior) Dani DeRosa has never played centerback in college. Her first time she played there at all was against UCLA. I think she's grown tremendously throughout the year, just the experience of not just playing but playing in that role. And then we've had several players like (sophomore defender) Ariana Robles who's one of those kids who just gets it done and (sophomore midfielder) Yasmin Ahooja has also been a stud back there. We'll use her in the midfield and then we'll bring her back to the back line where she's good with the ball, she's physical, she reads the game well, so I think there's a lot that's happened in the course of the year but part of it is belief. Just how they've come together and had each other's back, they've just played well as a group and there have been some outstanding individual performances within that late in the season here."

On UCSD women's soccer head coach Brian McManus going for his 500th career win tonight:

"That's phenomenal. To win that many games at any level is spectacular. That's a lot of games. I feel like I've done this for a long time and I don't even think I've coached in that many games. To have that many wins and that much success at the DIII level and the DII level over that many years says a lot about Brian. I consider him a friend. I think he's a great coach. He's one of the guys that I look to who's been in the business a long time that's done really well not only on the field but also who he is as a guy and obviously the lives he's impacted over at UCSD, so that's pretty impressive. Pretty excited for them that they get that opportunity. I know there are other teams, I know the Point Loma men are in the NCAA Tournament so it's pretty fun that our San Diego community has a lot to rally around and be excited about for soccer."

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