

Maui Jim's Maui Invitational

Monday, November 21, 2022

Maui, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

San Diego State Aztecs

Brian Dutcher

Lamont Butler

Matt Bradley

Postgame Press Conference

San Diego State - 88, Ohio State - 77

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with an opening statement from coach and then questions for our student-athletes.

BRIAN DUTCHER: I put on the board before the game, mental toughness, physical and mental. And mental's the most important. You can't be physically tough if you're not mentally tough. We knew this would be a battle and it was.

We got a really good defensive effort in the first half. We held 'em down and then they got going like they can. They started making threes and we kind of held in there toughness-wise. We didn't give in. They had a run, then we had a run. And we had a couple calls go against us, which is college basketball. These officials have a hard job and they do a really good job.

So we just knew that at the end of the day, we would determine whether we won or not, not the officials. Ohio State would have something to do with it, but we found a way to stay tough throughout and came away with a really nice win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Last season you scored, 80 points was your high. You've already scored 80, 82 and now 88 against a Big Ten team. What's changed and how much confidence do you have in each other that you're going to score?

MATT BRADLEY: Yeah, I would say, first, is our chemistry as a team, just having a year under our belts with the returning guys and also the new guys. They're super talented. So just us coming together and gelling is really big. And we're really deep. We got guys that can contribute and score every other night. You never know who is going to be the leading scorer or who is going to have their game. So we're really deep and I think those are two big factors.

LAMONT BUTLER: I would also say everybody's confident. Everybody's confident in their game. Everybody put in the work this summer and this fall to come out here on the big stage and show out, and it just showed today.

Q. Your coach talked about toughness and mental toughness. I wonder as this game goes on, you've been through some of these battles that a young Ohio State team, a new Ohio State team hasn't. Could you sense that as this game went on, that you guys had been there before, you knew how to handle those kind of moments, and maybe saw some hesitation on their part?

LAMONT BUTLER: I can't really speak for them, but I know for us, we go over late-game situations a lot in practice and stuff like that. That's a credit to our coaches. And we got a veteran team, so a lot of our players we have been through situations a lot and it showed at the end.

MATT BRADLEY: Yeah, both teams battled really hard towards the end. The last couple minutes of the game Ohio State, it could either have went either way because they're really forcing us, pushing up the tempo, and we just battled it out and got the W.

But no discredit to Ohio State. They're a great team. They challenged us. But, yeah, we've been battle-tested and we're going to keep going.

Q. Matt, what got you going? This is obviously your biggest game of the season. Was there a particular shot or feel that really got you locked in?

MATT BRADLEY: No, I started off the game 0-3, but I think the biggest difference between this game and the other ones is that I didn't get down on myself. I knew it was a long game. It's 40 minutes. My teammates trusted me. Other guys stepped up tonight. I'm including those other guys, Micah, Adam. Mont's been consistent as far as scoring. But I'm really proud of our team and I'm glad I finally had that game where I could finally get going.

Q. Lamont, probably the key stretch of the game was they cut it to four with about 13 minutes left and Micah hits a three, you get an offensive rebound and feed Micah for another three, and then you steal the inbounds. Just take it through from the time when you passed it to Micah and what did you see on that inbounds?

LAMONT BUTLER: I saw that the point guard took the ball out and everybody ran back. So I was like, okay, somebody has to come up. And then, and no one came up for awhile, and then the dude finally came up, and he was the only guy up there, so I knew he was going to throw it there. And then after that, the fans just roared, and then that just kind of kept our momentum going right there all the way through the game.

Q. You talk about your depth a lot wearing teams down. Do you think that was just sort of one of those mental fatigue situations where they all ran down and they are maybe a little bit tired and made that mistake?

LAMONT BUTLER: For sure, it could be. For sure, it could be. But we got a deep team. Everybody contributed tonight. I'm really proud of our bench how they came in and just hooped at a high level. They upped the game for us and our starters we had to step up our game because they stepped up their game. It was a great team win.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll let you guys go and take questions for coach.

Q. You outscored 'em 41 to 27 bench points. Your bench scored like 11 of your first like 21 points. How do you get them prepared to kind of step in? That's pretty good depth when you're talking about bench scoring.

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, we got great depth. My coaches keep going, Can we put the subs in? Can we put the subs in? It's like we're two minutes in. I said, no, you can't put the subs in yet. Couldn't score the ball. I said, We're all right. It's only five-nothing. We're going to be fine. I'm going to let that first group get in a rhythm.

Matt had some really good looks that didn't go in. We had some good looks. But we've had scoring off the bench all year. And we've got guys that could be starting. Micah could be starting. Jaedon could be starting. We have guys coming off the bench who could easily be starting for us, AG.

So we have a deep team and I think we're taking advantage of that.

Q. You guys don't get to play power conference teams that often, particularly teams in the Big Ten. What do you think it means to your kids? Do they get extra juiced up when they play a game like this on national TV?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I don't if they get extra juiced up. I think we have a lot of confidence and belief in our program because we've done it over a long period of time. It's not like we've been waiting for this opportunity. We've had this opportunity.

A year ago, or four years ago, I was sitting in here talking about how Duke beat us. So we've played big games in these tournaments and it's good to get a win in the first one, but we know it's going to be really tough in this winning side of the bracket. We have to find a way to get a second win, no matter who it's going to be tomorrow.

So this is a real challenge and that's why the mental toughness part is so important, and the depth. We might have the depth that will help us get another win in this tournament because we are going nine deep and we could easily go 12 deep. That's how many really good players I have in the program right now.

Q. You mentioned in your opening statement it got, when things got difficult, we didn't give up, we didn't give in. What does it take for a team to be able to handle that in a crazy environment, an early season game, still kind of figuring things out both sides? Like, what does it take for a team to know what to do in those moments that can lead to a win?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I think it's experience. I think I have five fifth year seniors. So these guys have been in a lot of those moments, whether it was here at San Diego State for their entire career or whether it was at Cal or Oakland University or TCU or wherever they came from. They have been in a lot of important games. So there's no greater teacher than experience. I think their experience showed out.

And then we have a coaching staff that we don't get panicked. If they're on a run, I just tell 'em, Do you think it was going to be easy? Did you think any of this was going to be easy? No, it wasn't going to be easy, so just find way, just find a way to finish and stay positive, and that's what we did. We found way to finish.

Q. Bruce Thornton, their point guard, freshman point guard, what it was like preparing for him and then how that matched up to how he played today.

BRIAN DUTCHER: He was tough. They're strong. They got big, strong guards. But they're still finding their way. This is what we're all here for. We're all here to kind of learn where we're at at this time of the year. None of these teams here are going to be like this a month from now. They're all going to be better. That's the scary part. All these teams here are really good and they're all going to get better.

So maybe we had a leg up because we had more experience than Ohio State had. But if we run into Ohio State a month from now and those young guys get all that experience, then it's going to be another tough battle if it ever happens.

So we had experience on our side and I think it paid off for us.

Q. I asked Lamont about that sequence there where they cut it to four. You decided not to call a timeout. Would you have maybe called a timeout last year? And do you have more comfort this year that your team can just go score more points?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I didn't have time to take a timeout. We had eight points before I could blink my eyes. So Micah hit a couple big threes and then they forgot to leave a guy in the back court and Lamont saw that, took advantage of it and got us that extra basket. They were on a heck of a run. They had tightened it down. Just, that's how quick a game can turn either way, for them or for us.

So we made the timely shots, we made the timely steal when we needed it, and that was, kind of gave us the cushion we needed to try to fight to the end.

Q. Your thoughts on Matt finally getting untracked this season?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, he's, I mean, Matt's a dynamic offensive player. I never worried about it because I had seen a full body of work from last year, so I know what he's capable of. It's just a matter of getting the confidence up and getting in a rhythm. So now he's in a little bit of a rhythm, so maybe we can ride that for awhile. He's a dynamic offensive player.

Q. From here on out, you won't play a team that's ranked below you. All the teams, assuming Arizona wins tonight. You'll play all teams ranked better than you. Is it almost like gravy at this point that you're not supposed to win these games, according to the rankings, but you get a shot at 'em?

BRIAN DUTCHER: No. We want to win the whole thing. We want to win the Maui Invitational. So we are here to win every game we play, and we schedule that way, and we are here for that reason, to win the event. So whether it's easy to say. It's hard to do. So we'll see if we're up to the challenge tomorrow.

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