



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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## San Diego State-McNeese Postgame Quotes

### SDSU Head Coach Brian Dutcher

#### **Opening Statement:**

"A step forward, defensively more than anything else. We emphasized it. Obviously when you give up 90 points, you're going to emphasize the defense. We emphasize it all the time anyway, but we challenged them. We talked about a level of toughness at the defensive end and you can't just say you've got to play tougher. What does that mean? It means do your job every time. If you're supposed to help, help. If you're supposed to run back, run back. So we talked about a level of toughness, which just means be more consistent with the job we've given you. I think they responded. Offensively, I like the pace we're playing at. Obviously we didn't make a lot of threes. We had a lot of good open looks and the thing I like about this team is when we have 33 baskets, eight of them assisted again, our turnovers were down eight, so we took care of the ball for the most part in an up-and-down game and we shared the ball. If we'd have made a few more shots, then obviously the assist total would've been a lot better. But the shots that we took were mostly assisted, there wasn't a lot of one-on-one play. There was a lot of team play, which I love to see."

#### **On Devin Watson's evolution and turnovers:**

"Devin did a great job. He had nine assists against Arizona State. So you go 17 assists in the last two games, that's pretty good. Obviously he shot the ball better today. He took 14 shots and made eight of them. Against Arizona State he only made four. He had the same looks, but he just couldn't get them to roll in. The thing we have to do a better job of when we get in there close is to find a way to get some more offensive rebounds. When the guards get in there and they penetrate and they need help, we've got to clean up some more of that. And I challenged them at halftime to get on the offensive glass. I think maybe two of the first three possessions of the second half, Cam got some offensive rebounds. He went in there, got his hands on them. He wasn't rewarded, but I told him you're not always going to get rewarded, but if you keep at it and you do the right thing all the time, eventually the reward will come. So I was real pleased with the way Cam got to the glass and we got a little bit better to the offensive glass in the second half."

#### **On the second-half lineup and the zone:**

"We like the zone. We wanted to consider zoning Arizona State, but we watched enough film and did enough film breakdown that we thought they were really, really good against the zone. It's a great way to change the tempo of the game, so we used it today when we already had the lead. So it's always safe to try it then. We've been zoning in practice, we've been working on a zone. So we will use zone this year. How much will be determined on what film study we do and how good we think they are against zone. The thing with the zone is if we stay with it, if they hit a three we won't jump out of it right away. We'll stay in it for a three or four or five minute stretch or longer if we think it's effective and we won't panic and get out of it if they make a long three on us, as long as we're playing it well."

#### **On Jordan Schakel's development:**

"He was making threes against the zone, so they zoned us! We missed a couple shots, so we put Jordan in there, we don't have Max at our disposal right now. And obviously, he's really dangerous against the zone. Max is maybe one of the best shooters in the country. But we know he's out for a couple weeks now, minimal with that bone bruise. We got a shooter off the bench and Jordan's been shooting well in practice and all through the preseason games. So we put him out there and he made a couple. Had he missed some jump shots, maybe we'd have gone back with someone else. But once you start making shots then there's a great comfort to leave that guy out there and see if he can keep rolling to stretch that defense. He puts his work in. He's in the gym every day at 7 a.m. over at the JAM Center getting his own shooting in. We're not in there with him, he's just in there getting shots up. So we know he's putting his work in. If hard work's rewarded, it was rewarded tonight for him and for us because he was making shots."

#### **On what Devin Watson brings that the team didn't have last year:**

"He's just an ornery little guy out there. He plays like a small little guard with a chip on his shoulder. So he's in there with the big guys taking contact and he's not afraid to, and he's finding people. He plays with a swagger about him. He's confident and he wants to win at everything. Every drill he wants to win. He's got a winning attitude and he's got a toughness about him. When he's out there playing well, it makes everybody better."

#### **On the takeaway from this game:**

"We have to become a better rebounding team. I saw that at Arizona State. There were a lot of times where we missed layups and we were standing there and we should've grabbed it and put it back in. Today, we were driving in and missing layups, when the bigs come to help that means there's no one left to box you out, so you have to go get some of those. So we have to work on that and continue to improve that. It's not a matter of want, just like anything else, if you work on things you get better at them. So we

have to find a way to drill them on it where it's more natural for them to clean some of that up. Rebounding is like anything else. You can talk rebounding, but when you see a great rebounder no coach made them that. These kids are instinctive and they just go get the ball. So we just have to continue to find ways to drill them, but know that some of them aren't instinctual so we're going to have to teach them to be better rebounders."

**On Watson's defensive development:**

"Justin (Hutson) and I brought him into the office together and showed him all the times against Arizona State where he gave up a blow-by, which is a quick drive to the basket where it's just a direct line. We showed him, you have to get better at this. We challenged him and he did get better today. Now, he had a couple, but he didn't have as many. The thing with these kids is they all want to get better, they just want to know how so we have to show them. Once we show them and we set a higher standard, then if they're competitive, which they are, they're going to try to work hard to please us and reach that standard. They all want to be good. So Devin's doing a better job, but obviously when you're undersized he's got to be quick and cut those guys off because the deeper they get, the harder it is for him to challenge that shot."

**SDSU Senior Forward Malik Pope**

**On coming back after ASU loss:**

"Play harder and smarter and tougher than we did against ASU. That is as simple as it gets."

**On Pope reading junior guard Devin Watson's moves on a few looks:**

"I'm just happy to have him. It's fun, he has a really good IQ on the fast break and knows where he wants the ball and what to do with it. When I get the rebound and see him, it's like, 'Go ahead.'"

**On the team's offensive play:**

"It brings more confidence for our players leading into the next game. It felt good to see those shots fall in and get the rhythm back. Hopefully that carries on to the next one and in practice."

**On the team's defensive play creating momentum:**

"It really started on the defensive end for us, it usually gets us going and tonight it really did."

**On defensive play compared to past years:**

"We could definitely play a lot better, but we were doing well beyond the string and being in the right places helps out."

**SDSU Junior Guard Devin Watson**

**On chemistry between him and senior forward Malik Pope:**

"Our chemistry is definitely getting better. Sometimes he reads me and I read him. I know where he is going to be, even before I get the ball. He's in the right spot, so it makes it a lot easier."

**On if he was in attack mode:**

"I wouldn't say attack mode; I was just reading the defense a lot tonight. I didn't have to be overly aggressive. Just made the right plays, had the opportunity to score, and had opportunities to make my teammates better. It really wasn't about being aggressive or not, it was just being aggressive with certain plays and knowing when to give the ball up."

**On when he doesn't have anyone to pass to:**

"That's when I get in attack mode. When I was on the fast break I saw two defenders on the side and one in front of me. I didn't see any teammates on the side, so that's when I went in attack mode and finished it."

**On his cramp during the game:**

"It was just my calf. I knew it was coming, I kind of felt it. I drank some Gatorade and water, but I knew it was going to happen. I just didn't know when."

**On defensive game:**

"We made our shots. Everybody felt confident. We played better defense tonight, so that helped. When we got defensive stops, it allowed our transition game to be in full effect."

**On transition to SDSU basketball:**

"Coming here, a lot of people didn't think I was really a defensive player, but I think I have learned a lot here defensively. It's just being in the right spots and guarding the ball. Here you have to play defense, so I had to learn. I couldn't put it off. I think I got better defensively being an Aztec."

## **McNeese Head Coach Dave Simmons**

### **On what SDSU was doing well during their 33-8 run to end the first half:**

"Their transition game was very good. We were getting one shot and they would get it out and run. They did a very good job with that. We thought, if we just made a bucket when it was 13-11 [we could have changed the game]. We changed the offense a couple of times and took a couple shots and did not convert. I thought that really changed the game but another change was when we went zone and [SDSU freshman guard Jordan Schakel] came into the game and hit a couple threes. If we had known on the scouting report that he can shoot, we probably would have went man-to-man. But their transition game was very good tonight and for us to be in games like this here, Kalob Ledoux and James Harvey have got to get shots for us. They are our perimeter game and we have to get some threes for them but we did not get that tonight."

### **On what he takes away from a game like this:**

"We still have some kids that are new to the program but you saw guys competed. I thought Quattarius Wilson played well, we just got to get some of our older guys to play at that energy and that level. A junior college kid came in and he competed, he had five offensive rebounds and 15 points. We have got to get [Stephen] Ugochukwu going, he's been a main guy for us. We have to get him going because we need his help when we face teams like San Diego State that are left on our schedule."

### **On if SDSU's length was a factor in contesting a lot of their shots:**

"Yeah, probably, but James and Kalob are used to having length on them and shooting the ball and knocking it down. You give them credit because length does create those hard opportunities but we have got to make those types of shots. That is the biggest thing. Going back to the game, we could never stop them in transition. We picked up the point guard too late and by the end they were either getting layups or dunks. That was probably the biggest weakness in the game for us, the transition."

### **On SDSU junior guard Devin Watson:**

"Not only Watson, there were so many of them playing well, but I thought he played well. I thought their guard game was obviously a lot better than ours tonight. Their guards got it up in transition, found open men and their big kids did not have to do as much because their guards were really influencing the game from a transition standpoint. But you look at this whole team, obviously they did what they needed to do to win this basketball game. But you look at a kid like Watson, he was playing very well and he got his team playing very well."

**-SDSU-**