

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Col of Charleston vs San Diego State

Thursday, March 16, 2023

Orlando, Florida, USA

Amway Center

**San Diego State Aztecs**  
**Coach Brian Dutcher**

**Matt Bradley**

**Micah Parrish**

**Jaedon LeDee**

Media Conference

San Diego State - 63, Charleston - 57

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by San Diego State.

COACH DUTCHER: First of all, congratulations to Pat Kelsey and Charleston. They had a great season. They're sitting where we were last year, disappointed. But they had an incredible season.

We knew what we were going to get into tonight. We knew they were wired like us, tough, physical. We knew it would be a battle. We respected the heck out of them and we played well enough to get a victory. And I've said this many times, we're one of the few teams in the country, that when the offense isn't going, we can play defense and rebound well enough to stay in the game until we make timely shots.

Matt made timely shots. Micah made a timely 3, and we're very happy to be moving forward in this event. And we'll hopefully play better moving forward.

I think as much as you say it's just another game of basketball, don't be nervous, be the best version of you, there are nerves that go into this tournament. I thought we were nervous at the start but settled in and played a very solid basketball game.

**Q. After the way things ended last season and the free throws, to come up so big on so many late**



**possessions, how validating is this moment?**

MATT BRADLEY: It's a really big moment. It feels good to have this win, especially in a game like that, so tight and so close. And we've been battle tested all season, going to Maui, the Mountain West Tournament. So just to be here on the big stage, we've been through it. I've been battle tested toward the ends of games and so have my teammates. Glad we pulled this one out.

**Q. How confident are you particularly with the ball when you're driving to the basket and finishing there? Seems like you did that over and over in this game?**

MATT BRADLEY: It's been a mental roller coaster my whole college career. I feel like right now I'm in a good place mentally where late in the game my teammates, my coaches trust me. More importantly I trust myself. So I'm feeling really good right now.

**Q. Brian, you talked about the toughness you guys were able to display. Moving forward and going into the next round against a team like Furman, coming off an emotional win over Virginia what are you expecting to see from them?**

COACH DUTCHER: We're a non-Power 5 school. So are they. We know respect is sometimes hard to come by. We'll respect the heck out of them. We'll watch tape and get ready to play like we're playing the number one team in the country.

We prepare hard. We respect everybody we play and we will do the same for Furman when we see them on the court.

**Q. Jaedon, you almost had an identical statistical game to the Mountain West championship. At this point, where is your confidence level at compared to earlier in the season when you're getting used to teammates and what they do here?**

JAEDON LEDEE: I'm feeling really good right now. I think we're playing our best basketball right now. My teammates are playing good, I'm playing good and I think we're gelling



at right at the time.

**Q. How confident are you when Matt has the ball in those late-game situations?**

JAEDON LEDEE: Very confident. Matt's our brother. So Matt or anybody who has the ball, we have full confidence in them that they're going to do to make the team win.

**Q. Micah, talk about you hadn't been that involved in the offense through the flow of the game early, but just the decision to take that critical three?**

MICAH PARRISH: I just try to take the open shots. I believe in my teammates. I feel like if you're open the ball is going to come to you. When I got it, I knew I was open so I shot it.

I just think that offense, every night may not be your night. You just have to just continue to keep working, do the best you can and just be a good teammate.

**Q. Matt, how do you continue to be so strong with the ball around the basket in those situations as you're finishing?**

MATT BRADLEY: Thank God. Thank my dad for building a strong frame on me. We got some strong guys on the team but the guys I was going against, he was even stronger.

To bump with him all night, or all evening was pretty tough. You've got to be confident in those moments. It's more mental than anything. Just going in there, not looking for the foul call but actually trying to finish is really big in those moments.

**Q. Matt, talk about you guys saw what happened in the first game with Furman and Virginia, and you know very well in this tournament anything can happen. When that gets tight, one possession, tie game late, what's going through your head?**

MATT BRADLEY: Today was one of those games like Furman, like last year against Creighton. We've been battle tested, though, so for us to be in this position now, we had to have a bunch of games, some losses, some wins that came down to the wire like that.

I think we were under control for most of the game. We didn't really lose ourselves, we kept to ourselves and trusted our teammates and coaches. When the game got tight I don't think we got tight. We just wanted to win the game. That's what we did.

**Q. I think Mountain West had lost 11 straight NCAA Tournament games. You snapped that streak. Were you aware of that? Is this more one of those happenstance things based on matchups?**

COACH DUTCHER: Everybody makes us aware of it, so yeah. The thing you can't lose sight of is every team and every season is different. There's no history. This team is creating its own history right now.

There are some returning players off last year's team that experienced some things that were disappointing, but you learn from that. And so we're not worried about past failures or successes. We're only focused on the moment. And that's how you win games. You're focused on the moment. You're not worried about the past. You're staying in the present. That's what we're doing.

**Q. They're a very good 3-point shooting team. What did you do to stop them from getting going on the 3-point line?**

MATT BRADLEY: We trusted our game plan. The biggest thing was boxing them out on the glass. I think the first half they had one offensive rebound, but then the first three minutes of the second half they had five.

We had to come together tightly and quickly in order to stop that. And I think we did a good job. They hit some big shots, but I'm really proud of our guys and how we defended them.

MICAH PARRISH: Coming into the game, Coach Dave made a point about how they were a really good 3-point shooting team. So we had to keep our hands in, keep our heels (indiscernible) on the line to close out. We really had to respect them, basically.

**Q. How much of this moment is kind of a chance to exhale? I know you guys say you don't look back, but there's that history and you've gotten over that hump now. Even the Mountain West Conference has had a tough run in recent years in this tournament that you guys finally broke through. There has to be a little bit of relief in that.**

COACH DUTCHER: Not really. Every season is its own season. And so you can't obsess over that or you're going to stress yourself. I told the story about when we won the national championship Glen Rice was sleeping on the training table before the game.

So I told them if we (lost audio) play Furman and I'm sleeping on the training room table, wake me up.

We're just trying to be relaxed, enjoy the moment, try not make too big a deal of it. It's basketball. We have a good team. We want to play well, but we can't stress ourselves over what's happened in the past or things that we can't control. We just are going to embrace the whole thing, have fun with it and try to continue to win games.

**Q. How good does this one feel? And just talk about the moment.**

JAEDON LEDEE: It feels good. This is my first NCAA since freshman year, so it feels real good to get this win. But we're not done yet. We'll get ready for the next game.

MATT BRADLEY: This feels really good, our first March Madness win. Looking forward to many more and excited for our team.

MICAH PARRISH: This was my first win, too. So I mean just living in the moment, just trying to stay present, really.

**Q. I saw you guys down in the corner. You saw it, watching the end of the Furman-Virginia game. Just sort of a reminder what can happen, you know from last year what can happen in these tournaments. How much of that going through your mind, like, we're not going to have that kind of finish here and just close the door? Maybe you can start, Matt.**

MATT BRADLEY: Like you said, a lot of the guys that were here last year are here this year, with the Creighton situation. And it wasn't just some free throws. We watched film and we were up nine with three minutes left.

So we understand how important it is to close out games because in March Madness anybody can win. Ranking doesn't matter, nothing matters. The hardest team is going to win and that's what we did.

Watching the Furman game, I think that was a good thing to see right before we got on the court because as good as Charleston is and as good as we think we are, it's up to anybody to take the game. I'm glad we saw that and we locked in for those final minutes.

**Q. Jaedon, as the game went on, particularly the first half went on, it became clear they were having trouble guarding you. What's your mindset there? Did you just think it's going to be bully ball from here on out?**

JAEDON LEDEE: I thought we could have worn them down on the inside. They were physical. They were a physical team. But we got a lot of physical dudes as well, including me, A.G., Keshad and Nate. We knew eventually they would wear down.

**Q. You go to the free-throw line there, you went to the free-throw line a couple times late last year. Any flashbacks? What was the mental process when you went to the line this year?**

MATT BRADLEY: No not flashbacks from last year. But mainly Colorado State. Wyoming earlier in the season where I knocked down some big free throws, and other times where I've hit big shots or big free throws in my career.

All the negativity and (indiscernible) those it's going to allow you to mess up the opportunity in front of you. I'm just thinking positive things, I'm looking at the bench and everybody trusts me now. Nobody side-eying.

I think I have full trust in my teammates and in my coaches on making that free throw. So it felt really good.

**Q. Micah, you hit a great shot. You hadn't had a great shooting night. What did you see there and what gives you that confidence to step up and just take that shot?**

MICAH PARRISH: Well, I know I'm a confident shooter. I feel like every shot I take I'm going to make. When I saw I was open, I shot it. That's it. I don't overthink of it. Each shot I take I don't think about the last shot I missed or the last shot I made.

COACH DUTCHER: Every shot he takes I think is going to go in. So I want him to keep shooting when he's open.

**Q. Again, you guys saw Furman. What are your thoughts on playing Furman? And obviously it's not Virginia. It's not a high seed. But they got some of that March Madness magic going on.**

MATT BRADLEY: They're a really good team from what I've seen. They have a really good offense. But we're dogs like them. We're not no high major school, we have a chip on our shoulder. We're came here to have magic too. We're looking forward to that matchup. We are both going to play hard, and we want to get it just as bad as they do.

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**Col of Charleston Cougars**  
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THE MODERATOR: We're joined by University of Charleston.

COACH KELSEY: I'd like to first recognize Brian and his team at San Diego State. Watching tape on them over the last several days, I have unbelievable respect for their program, first of all, the way they play, how they play.

I mentioned it the other day in the press conference they hang their hat, pride themselves on a lot of the same things that we do and that's toughness, tenacity, they're a strong, physical team. One of the best defensive teams in the country.

And they were the better team tonight and they made the plays down the stretch.

Can't be any prouder of our team. I read off a list of accolades of this team, which is amongst the greatest in the history of our program, whether it's the Charleston Classic, CAA regular season, CAA Tournament, a 20-game winning streak, Top 25, another 10-game winning streak. It's hard to do.

You go into gymnasiums on the road with a bull's-eye on their back. Those guys, to be as consistent as they have been, our seniors are so special. It's as special a group as I've ever coached. Hopefully I coach for a long time. But I know I'll never coach a group like this one. Just special.



Their professionalism, maturity, commitment to excellence every single day just amazed me. Blessed beyond belief. Praise God to have this opportunity to be the head coach and be around young men like these like and to coach at a world-class institution in a beautiful city. Very lucky and blessed.

**Q. You guys knew they were a really good 3-point defensive team. What did they do out there that shut down that aspect of your game tonight?**

ANTE BRZOVIC: I think they just made us uncomfortable shooting 3-point shots. Most of them were wide open. We just didn't make shots, I guess. These games, the shots are not falling in as they usually do against other teams.

But I think, overall, we have to be proud how we played the game, especially in the second half. We all gave our best. We were fighting really hard. It's just those last two minutes, the ball, I guess, didn't bounce our way. They made a couple of good plays. We didn't finish the way we wanted to. But have to regroup and be ready for the next year.

**Q. What is so difficult about trying to stop Matt Bradley off the drive when he gets to the basket? They went to that play a lot. And he drove and got key baskets in important moments. Why is that such a challenge?**

ANTE BRZOVIC: He's just a really good player. That's why he's here. That's why he plays at this stage. And we did a scouting on him. We knew what he's capable of doing.

For the bigger part of the game I think Jaylon did a great job trying to slow him down. We tried our best to give him help, but they just made a couple of bigger plays, plays when we didn't. And I think that's what separated us from them today.

**Q. Ryan, could you just talk about the specialness, if you will, of this team and what this one year in Charleston was like for you?**



RYAN LARSON: I can't put into words what this team means to me, what the coaches, the whole coaching staff means to me. Quite frankly, it's probably been the most special basketball season of my life. And it's all credit to my teammates and coaches.

And to College of Charleston as a whole, the school, the student body, just gave us so much support the whole season. I would not trade a single thing for what's happened this year. I absolutely love each and every one of them in the locker room.

**Q. You had a seven-point lead in the first half. What did they do or what did you guys not do that kind of changed the momentum of the game there to close the first half?**

COACH KELSEY: From what I remember, went on a little bit of a scoring drought. And again, they make it hard to score. Shot 30 percent from the field for the game, I believe, 20 percent from 3, and we're still right there with a one-possession game right there at crunch time.

They're long. They're athletic. They're tough. They're well-coached. They're well-schooled. And you knew going in, when you saw the matchup, you just look at their metrics and their statistics, and they take away 3s as good as anybody in the country and they defend the 3-point line and hold teams to as low a percentage as anybody in the country.

We knew we had our work cut out for us. We went inside a lot to Ante. Got us going early. Scored the ball. Loosened them up a little bit.

And to shoot that percentage and still be there at crunch time, I think, is a tribute to one thing. These guys' toughness. The second half -- we were getting our butts kicked physically in the first half, and we never do that. Ever.

We were getting seven percent of our misses back, and we're a team that gets 34, 35, something like that. We're top 20 in the country. And they were getting 36 percent of their misses. And a lot of those were tips, loose balls, 50/50 balls, ones that we take pride on eating loose balls for breakfast. That's what we do.

Before I said anything at halftime, those guys had already addressed it. No question, credit them, they were the better team tonight, they won. In my opinion, we were the more physical, relentless physical team in the second half and that's why we were able to be right there at the end.

**Q. If you could just follow up on the challenge of**

**defending Bradley with the ball in his hands going to the basket.**

COACH KELSEY: He's good. He's good. Big, strong, physical kid that can score from distance, can score at the rim, can put foul pressure on you. He's a very good all-around player.

I'm guessing he's All-Conference in the Mountain West. He's good. They have a good scheme that gets him the ball in places where he can be successful. Brian's a smart coach. He knows what he's doing. Kid made some big shots, big moment, probably a couple he'll tell his grandkids about.

**Q. What did you take from this whole experience, from winning the CAA championship all the way to here? What will you use to bring back for next year to hopefully get past this spot?**

COACH KELSEY: Well, you know what I told the guys in the locker room is, these seniors, although they played their last game in a Charleston uniform, they're going to leave a legacy that's going to last decades. It just will. These seniors led a team that lit our city on fire. Fire.

Charleston's been rocking. There's a bounce, there's a vibe on Kings Street. The arena's packed. That's because of the leadership and what these guys accomplished this year.

It's what seniors do. They set the stage, set the tone. And when you have it rolling as a program, when the new group walks in on day one, I have to say less because of the example that Ryan, the seniors set, and the guys like Ante who are going into his junior year, and the other guys that are older, they let the freshmen know before I even need to how we roll, what we do, what our culture is about, what we do, relentless effort, competitive excellence, power the unit, 25 strong.

And I told the team in the locker room that next year Ryan Larson is going to burst with pride when we're back here again, and next year take the next step, just like John Meeks and Jordan Sechan when they come back, and they use phrases and say things that's part of our culture.

And they took that and they're using it as they move forward in their life. That makes me proud as a coach. We're teachers I'm a teacher. Skip Prosser said, it's an Emerson quote, "Our chief want in life is someone who can make us do what we can."

I'm not the CEO of the program. I'm the CRO -- the chief reminder officer. And it's my job to tell them what the

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

standard is. Those guys lived up to it and then some. And I'm blessed to have the opportunity to be their coach.

**Q. It hurts now obviously, the loss hurts now, but when do you or can you in a couple of days here kind of rise above the, the tree line, as you say, and appreciate everything that happened this season?**

ANTE BRZOVIC: Absolutely. I think when it's all said and done, and when the emotions cool down a little bit, I think we have to be really, really proud of what we did this year, winning so many games. It's just special.

The group of guys that we have. I will never ever forget this season, these guys, these coaches that I had this year, because it means so much to me. And I'm broken the way this ended, because it's harsh, because everything we did this year, it came down to this.

But it's just how it is. So we've got to bounce back. I know we will because that's what we're all about. And I can't wait for the next year.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned some of the things that San Diego State did to you guys and you were a very efficient offensive team. I think it's 57 points, the lowest you scored this season. What can they do in this tournament? Is this type of team that they can get on a run and cause other teams problems as well?**

COACH KELSEY: I think so. I think there's no question. I think they're a very good team, very well-coached. They're talented, they're athletic, they're tough and disciplined. And they're battle tested, older group, they're experienced. They went through a tough time last year and took the next step today. I don't see any reason why they can't.

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