

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - San Diego State vs Alabama

Friday, March 24, 2023

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

KFC Yum! Center

San Diego State Aztecs
Coach Brian Dutcher
Darrion Trammell
Jaedon LeDee
Keshad Johnson

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

San Diego State - 71, Alabama - 64

BRIAN DUTCHER: First of all, congratulations to Alabama. They've got a really good team, and we had to play really well tonight in order to come out with a victory. So Coach Oats and his staff do a great job.

Proud of our guys. You know, we played a really solid first half. We turned it over too much probably. It felt like we turned it over 80 times. It was only five times in the first half, but it seems like both defenses were controlling the tempo of the game. Nothing was easy.

To our credit, when they came out energized the second half, they built a lead. We took a time-out I think right by the 12-minute mark, and then Darrion came out of the time-out and hit a three and a two, and he changed the momentum. Then we got settled back in.

I just tell the guys, nothing is going to be easy. So just keep playing our brand of basketball, keep doing your best, stay competitive. And I'm using Muhammad Ali quotes because we're Louisville, and we talked about confidence and the key to confidence is being fearless, and I thought we were fearless tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Dutch, you kind of hit it at the moment that Darrion changed the complexion, but you are down nine at that



point. Huge Alabama crowd. Why didn't this get away from you guys in that moment?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Just because we've got an experienced team. They've been in a million of these situations over their careers. And so they didn't shy away from the moment. They weren't nervous. They just had a quiet confidence about them that they knew they had enough time to play themselves back into the game, and that's what they did.

Q. What does it mean to be somewhere not only that this program has never been, but the entire conference has never been?

BRIAN DUTCHER: We recruit and we say our goal is to win a national championship, so we can't act surprised when we have an opportunity to advance to the Final Four. That's what we tell them when we recruit them, and it's just not words to get them to come here. It's words we believe in.

So that's why we celebrate it, but we're not going to over-celebrate. There's another step to be had. This is not the end of the journey. This is the next step, and we're waiting to take it.

Q. Keshad, you took on Brandon Miller most of the game tonight. He had six turnovers. What worked for you in forcing him to get uncomfortable out there today?

KESHAD JOHNSON: Credit to him, first of all, he played good all season. We know he is a lottery pick, and he is a talented player, but with guys like that, you just have to try to contain them. You know they're going to hit shots and make things happen. You have to try your best to make things as tough as possible.

That's all I did. I just gave 110 maximum effort. Credit to my teammates also. When I switched off of him, they also did a great job of making things hard on him too.

It's an all-around team effort. It's not just myself. It's a team effort.



Q. This is for Darrion. You have obviously had nights where you scored like this before, but obviously not on this stage. How much of this was opportunity that you found in their defense? How much of it was you had to do it because of the way things were going and Matt struggling? How much of it you just feel it?

DARRION TRAMMELL: I think it's more of a feeling. I feel like throughout the whole week I've been prepping for him. I knew what kind of coverage they ran as far as ball screens, and that's something I was working on all week.

I mean, at this point in the year you kind of just have to have that confidence that you're going to knock those shots down that you've been working on.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Nathan Mensah is a two-time Defensive Player of the Year, and he had five blocks tonight. He played like it. Then Lamont Butler was a Defensive Player of the Year this year too. One won it from the coaches; one won it from the media.

We defend at a high level, and that is what allows us a chance to win games. Like I said, defense alone won't win. We have to at some point make shots, and we made important shots down the stretch.

Q. (Question regarding Matt Bradley.)

BRIAN DUTCHER: I mean, we're not a one-player team. Matt is a go-to guy for us, but we're deep. I've said that about our team. And so when he is not in the game, I'm not uncomfortable that we're not going to have an ability to score the ball.

The thing I like best about Matt is he missed a lot of looks early in the game that I thought were clean looks, and to his credit, he didn't let that bother him. He stepped up at the end of the game and made some really important looks.

Q. For Jaedon and Darrion, you guys transferred to San Diego State for just this kind of opportunity. For both of you, given that decision, just the pay-off, and what goes through your head when you hear the phrase "Elite Eight"?

JAEDON LEDEE: I think it's great. Like Coach Dutch said, when he recruited us, we're trying to go to a national championship. It's a step on the way there. It's a great accomplishment. And, I mean, to be one of the teams, like he said, in the conference and in our history to make it is

pretty cool.

DARRION TRAMMELL: Yeah, like he said, it's a blessing. Coming here, this is all we really talked about is win the conference championship, win the conference, and then conference tournament, and then make a deep run in March. It's a blessing to be here, and it feels good to see the hard work has paid off.

Q. Alabama is the third No. 1 seed to exit the tournament. Houston is down double figures late in the game. Can you guys just explain what's going on this year in this tournament?

BRIAN DUTCHER: It's just parity. That's what it is. You know, there's not a lot of difference between the best team in the country and the worst team in the country. You're seeing that on this stage.

I mean, everybody is good. I mean, anybody in our conference could have beat us this year. We had 1,000 close games, and we found a way to win them.

So I guess the difference between being on the top and being on the bottom is finding a way to win a close game.

Q. Yeah, this is for Jaedon. There were not very many open looks in this game for anybody, but you had that one at the end where you threw it down. Can you sort of take us through that play? Clowney tried to draw a charge, and that left you wide open. Can you take us through that play and tell us what it felt like to throw that down?

JAEDON LEDEE: Coach drew up a good play for us five to come get some motion coming off dribble hand-off. I guess they scouted us a little bit because they were trying to blow it up, so he overplayed it, and then I just had to change direction, and then, you know, he fell down, and he just left me wide open.

Q. This question is for Coach Dutcher. Yesterday I asked people about your team's depth and how you thought that would match up against Alabama (indiscernible). You outplayed Alabama, so, you know, what does that say about the ability to play nine, ten players tonight?

BRIAN DUTCHER: The issue is not having a deep bench. The issue is everybody buys into a deep bench. They're not crying when they come out. I mean, we took the starting five out three or four minutes into the second half, even before the first TV time-out.

And some programs that would be a disaster. You would



have to sit there and massage egos to get them ready to play when they got back in.

This team is not wired that way. We're wired to win, and everybody supports and cares about one another, and we sacrifice to do it. So I'm just proud of this group.

Q. Darrion, you're down nine against the No. 1 team in the country. You go on a 12-0 run to turn the game around. Was there a change in the mindset at all, or was this just business as usual?

DARRION TRAMMELL: We talked about it in the huddle. I was telling the guys that it's March. We're going to go on our run, and that was -- I truly believe that, and I just took the opportunities they gave me. I feel like the big was too low in the drop. I took my shot, and, I mean, I just made a play on defense.

Then from there our team was in it. That's when the momentum changed.

Q. If all three of you players could answer this. All season, from the beginning of the season, you said we're making a deep run in March. A couple of you said Final Four. Some of you said national championship. Do you think anybody outside your team believed you? And why were you saying that back then?

KESHAD JOHNSON: From the jump we knew how talented our team was at every position. Like Coach Dutch said, we're all deep, but with the glory of God, like, we all stay together.

And it's not really about who else believe in us. It's about us being able to believe in ourselves, believe in ourselves and believe that we could really do it. That's what's showing today.

JAEDON LEDEE: Yeah, just echoing what Keshad said. Nobody ever believes when you set big goals. We believe, and that's why we're in the position that we are in now, and we'll just keep pushing.

DARRION TRAMMELL: It's believing. We're a very good team. I feel like Dutch talked about it a lot, our depth and just the DNA of our team. I feel like we can beat anyone in the country. We let it all hang tonight.

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