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5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

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San Diego State Men's Basketball Press Conference **Feb. 24, 2022**

Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"We're ready for our final push of the regular season, four games in nine days. It will be tough. It will mix travel with home games. We've got an opportunity to stay in the conference race. As much as it seems like being two games out with four to go, it's not attainable to win a conference title, it still is. Every game in this conference is really hard and the teams at the top have hard games left. We have to take care of our business. We have to win at home tomorrow against San Jose and try to stay in this race as we approach the final nine days of the regular season."

On problems caused by Maldonado and Wyoming big men:

"Ike and Maldonado have had great seasons. They both can back you down in the low post and score one-on-one. If you double, they are surrounded by great shooters. Wyoming has done a great job all year of playing to those two and spreading it out for open threes. Coach Linder has done a really good job. It will be a tall task in Laramie, on Monday, to battle the Cowboys."

On difficulty of playing in Laramie:

"It's the only place that we charter every year because it's so hard to get to. To fly to Denver and bus over the mountain pass, you never know what weather you're going to get, if you can even get in there. We're going to charter in there and charter back, not only to give ourselves the best opportunity to win that game, but then the follow up game, coming back for Fresno. Travel in the Mountain West is not easy, it's tough. A lot of the teams charter every game. We don't charter every game. We charter four legs a season. We try to choose the best ones to get us back in town, where we can sleep in our own beds in order to try and come back to win a game on a short turnaround."

On altitude in Laramie compared to other Mountain West schools:

"New Mexico and Wyoming provide the highest altitude games at over 7,000 feet. The fan bases are enthusiastic. We've been in Albuquerque enough to know that you can hardly hear yourself in that building during your own timeout. I remember being in this league when Wyoming was winning the league title and filling that building. I'd be surprised if we don't play in a full arena on Monday against Wyoming as they compete for a conference title."

On metrics:

"I'll look at them occasionally. They make me too nervous to get me looking too far ahead. I know that if we win games, we'll have a chance to make the tournament and if we don't win games, we won't. We have to just win games and the metrics will

take care of themselves. If we don't get a piece of this conference title, then we have to find a way to win three or four games in Las Vegas, next week, and get in automatically. As a coach, I pay attention to them, but I can't control them. All I can control as a head coach is the quality of play of our own team, so I try to focus on that more than the metrics."

On metrics taking strength of victory into account:

"I know that point spreads matter. I am grateful to win any game. I'm not a guy that tries to run up the score on anybody. We were fortunate to win at San Jose. I think it was a six point game in the second half and I was just happy to get a win. I think it ended up ten points. Our goal is to win the game. What the final score looks like, as long as the Aztecs are on top, that's all I really care about."

On meaning of Coach Linder's compliments:

"We've hung 14 conference titles, which leads the league by six. The culture that Steve Fisher brought to San Diego State all those years ago and the work we've put in to maintain it opens eyes around the conference. There are teams that are either trying to be like San Diego State or find ways to beat San Diego State. That's a great compliment to Coach Fisher and the job he did of building this program."

On other teams emulating San Diego State:

"We can't let people out-San Diego State San Diego State. That's a great challenge and we love the challenge. We continue to build this program. We're not where we want to be right now. We want to be in first place in this conference. We want to make deep runs in the NCAA Tournament. That's always been our goal and that will continue to be our goal. We build it every year to try and be the best version of ourselves."

On importance of a good conference:

"To go and lose at Boise by a point and gain ground in the metrics speaks to the quality of this league. We know that, the question is if the selection committee knows that. I've said it for the last four or five years that the Power Fives are getting more teams than the non-Power Five conferences. The Mountain West has done a good job, the WCC, a lot of these conferences around the country have done good jobs of building their leagues. Now, we have to see if we're all rewarded when it comes to Selection Sunday."

On playing in elevation:

"There have been studies done that if you can play between 24 and 36 hours after arriving, the altitude has a lessened effect. It has an effect and it effects everybody differently, but to acclimate to altitude you have to be there almost two weeks. We're not going anywhere for two weeks. We want to play as quickly as we can at altitude and we don't want to stay and have that second game. We have travel partners. We used to go Air Force, New Mexico, Colorado State, Wyoming, BYU, Utah, and the second game at altitude always seemed to have a greater effect than the first game."

On mindset coming off a close loss:

"You have to have a short memory. Even if we win that game, we're preaching to celebrate it tonight, but tomorrow, we go back to work. When you lose it, you say "Feel bad tonight, but don't feel bad tomorrow, we have work to do." We have quick turnarounds and that's an NBA mentality. When we're playing four games in nine days, we don't have time to worry about any win or loss. We have to solely focus on the next game at hand and this team has done a great job of doing that all season."

On room to improve after playing Boise State so closely:

"We lost the game, in large part, because they got to the foul line more than we did. They've done that all year. That's a big

winning stat, they've made more free throws in the conference than their opponents have taken. That's winning basketball any way you look at it. We let them beat us at the foul line. We have to do a good job defending against teams at a high level and not put them on the line. That's a lesson moving forward that we have to defend without fouling."

On takeaways from four close losses this season:

"This team has great grit and determination. These are not games where we've had 20 or 30 point leads and lost those leads. We've come from 20 down, we've come from ten down to fight our way back into these games and give ourselves and opportunity to win. This team plays hard for 40 minutes and if you're going to beat the Aztecs, you're going to have to compete for 40 minutes to do it."

On Matt Bradley practicing free throws since the Boise State game:

"We had to take yesterday off because we needed a day off due to a NCAA rule. We didn't go on the floor yesterday. If Matt is madder about missing them than I am, he'll make a lot more. We were both mad, but if he is madder, we'll be in good shape."

Closing statement:

"The fan support in Viejas has been incredible this year. With the restrictions that have needed to be followed to be in the building: vaccinated, boosted, or tested negative. I am so grateful for the fan support we've had. They've come out here, they've made a difference in these games. We need you out there for San Jose and Fresno, our last two home games of the season. You make a difference, and we want you in the building, we need you in the building for us to be at our best."

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