



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"We'll be back on the floor today, we took a day off yesterday, rested legs, and back on the floor for two really important preparation days before we head to Albuquerque to play New Mexico. Obviously, they got beat last night by Boise, so they're going to be desperate trying to put a resume together to make the NCAA tournament, and we're their best chance to do that. It'll be a sold-out Pit, and it'll be a heck of a game and we're looking forward to the challenge."

On what the team can improve on:

"Obviously we can get better in every area. Rebounding, offensive efficiency, defense, playing certain aspects of the game, and we're going to have to play well in New Mexico with House and Mashburn and Udeze. They all had good games against us last time, so it's not just stopping one guy when we play the Lobos. It's stopping a big group of them. It'll be a challenge and we will be ready for it."

On depth and different lineup possibilities:

"That's the beauty of our depth. We can go big, we can go small, we can go a lot of different ways on the floor, based on who we're playing and how the game is going. We'll make whatever adjustments we need to make, if we need to be bigger in order to contest more shots, we'll do that. It's just something we have to look at over the next day or two."

On the importance of free throws:

"Free throws are going to be a big part of this game. I think New Mexico is number ten in the country in made free throws a game. They play a lot of one on one, and they get downhill and draw fouls, whatever team gets to the line will be important. We have to play inside out, we have to be strong around the basket, draw fouls and try to make them when we get there."

On the last matchup versus New Mexico:

"I thought we played our way back into the game after being down 11 at halftime. We just weren't efficient enough offensively. First and foremost, on the fast break, we missed opportunities where we turned it over and we didn't even get a shot, so we have to be more efficient on the break, and then more efficient in the half court against a team that gets a lot of steals. I think House last time we played them was top five in the country in steals, and I know he's averaging three a game in the Mountain West this year. They're dangerous if you're sloppy with the ball and if you don't take care of the ball and turn it over, they're hard to beat."

On not having Arop in the previous matchup:

"We always miss AG. Hopefully he will be ready to go this time. We didn't have him in the first game and ended up playing Elijah, which is a hard spot to put a freshman in, but he played in the first half because we didn't have AG, so hopefully I have AG this time, and that will give us some veteran experience on the road."

On the difficult schedule ahead going into the tournament:

"For us to win a title, we have to go in there and win one of these games, and if we win two, we're going to be in great shape, but we have to find a way to win one of these next two. That's a challenge because we know both buildings will be sold out. New Mexico has been sold out for our games, we haven't been there in a couple of years, so it'll be the first time back to the Pit in a while, and then Boise on senior night, they'll be sold out. Based on what happens in Albuquerque, we could be playing for sole possession of first place in Boise. These next few games are going to be really important. I guess the nice thing is, we put a resume together where I feel like we're worthy of the NCAA tournament already. So now we're just trying to play for seeding and play for a championship, and that's kind of nice to have some of the pressure off."

On coaching against Mashburn Sr. at Michigan and now Mashburn Jr at New Mexico:

"First of all, if I coach against father and son, it means I've survived in coaching and that's a good thing. So no, Mashburn Sr. was an incredibly great player. We were very fortunate to beat them in the NCAA Tournament. Obviously, the son is a very good player. Maybe one of the best mid-range players in the country and leading the conference in scoring. So, he'll present a tremendous challenge for us in order to stop them both individually and as a team to try to contain him, a guy that can score the ball. I'm a little bit fearful because I think he had 48 straight games in double figures, and he didn't get double figures against Boise so I think he's going to be in the gym working and wanting to correct that when he sees the Aztecs."

On the team's motivation levels after New Mexico gave them their only home loss:

"Yeah, obviously, the team beat you, you want to play them again and have a chance to play better. And then just the implications of where we are in the conference title race. You know, it's a double edged sword so we want to beat them because of the way they beat us in our building and we want to beat them because we want to win a title. So they know that they want to win because they still feel they're close to an NCAA tournament bid and they have to probably win against us to have a chance, if they don't win the conference tournament. So, a lot at stake for both teams and should make for a really good environment and a really good game."

On playing in The Pit at New Mexico

"It'll be loud, but we played in loud environments. You know, we played at Colorado State, that was crazy. Nevada was crazy. Utah State was sold out. And so we've played in these environments and they're challenging. They're challenging to coach a team that when it gets so loud it's hard to communicate with your own team. And so, we have to find a way to make sure we're at our best and we're on the same page when we enter this game."

On if any seniors have made decisions regarding their extra year of eligibility:

"Not that I'm aware of. I mean, some people get ahead of themselves. I believe this isn't the right time to have that talk. You know and we saw it last year, AG and Nate both went through senior night and they both decided to come back. So, we may have guys go through senior night that may come back or may say, you know, I've got a college degree. You know, I want to pursue professional opportunities or get into the working world. So that's a discussion to be held after the season when we start seeing what is in store for their and our futures."

On SDSU being one of four universities with 20+ wins in both the men's and women's programs:

"Yeah, we couldn't be any happier for our women's program. Stacie's done a great job leading them. They put themselves in a position to get a good seed in the Mountain West Conference tournament and hopefully play themselves in the NCAA Tournament. So I know the work they put into it. They work hard, they're deserving and I'm wishing him good luck down the stretch like we need good luck down the stretch."

On Matt's hand injury:

"I think he's fine. I think it was extra. I think he'll be fine. They may have to split him for a practice or so. Hopefully he'll be fine come game time we'll find out."

On travel plans for back-to-back road games:

"We're going to fly commercial there tomorrow and then charter home after the game so we can get home for a night and then head to Boise. So, we're not spending four or five days at altitude."

San Diego State Senior Guard Lamont Butler

On the team's mindset going into the final two games of the regular season:

"Our mindset is to win, keep winning. If we win, everything gets taken care of. We want to win the conference. Going into March with a good head of steam. Keep winning, winning the best we can."

On the mindset of defending the backcourt:

"We just have to compete. Darrion and I feel like we are two of the best backcourts in the country. So, we've got to compete, try to hold them down. They're really good. So, we just got to go compete. Show them what we got and just try to get a win."

On what happened in the first game that went wrong:

"They were on it, and they were hitting every shot. They had a lot of shots. Offensively, we didn't have our best game that game, but they can have a lot of harsh shots. We've got to try to lower that down a little bit and get the job done."

On what went wrong that game:

"Yeah, it was a bunch of little, little things that happened during the game. Like you said, No AG, Nate fouling out. But we have everybody back for New Mexico, everybody wants to get that win back."

On defending Jaelen House:

"He's fast, real fast. So, keep up with him. He's really shifty, shoots the ball. Always playing downhill, always playing at a high pace so it's going to be another challenge guarding him. I think we'll be able to get it done though."

On if they like ending the season with tough games to prepare for the NCAA tournament:

"Yeah, for sure. For sure. We like all competitive games. It's fun, they have big atmospheres and close games and we're ready, we're ready for it."

On bringing consistency and rhythm:

"I just have to go out there and try to guard my opponent. Just trying to get them out of their rhythm a little bit. Like everything else it'll take care of itself."

On staying focused with the end of season and March Madness coming:

"We all got one goal and that's just to win, win as much as we can. We're trying to get to the national championship. That's our highest goal. And that's the motivational factor every day going into every game."

On expectations of the environment in New Mexico:

"I heard from a lot of people that the atmosphere is wow. So, it's going to be exciting. This is my first time there and I can't wait."

San Diego State Senior Guard Matt Bradley

On the state of his finger injury:

"Yeah, it's okay. I got the X-ray back. It's not broken. It's jammed. But that's just part of playing basketball. You got to play and get through it. I'm feeling alright though."

On how much the team is looking forward to playing after the loss:

"Yeah. We're really looking forward to it. It's a game that's been on the calendar ever since we lost and we know how important this game is not only to beat them, but just a win in this part of the season so we're really looking forward to it and doing what we can to get ready."

On how much he uses his pinky to shoot:

"So, I broke this finger last year so I kind of have been dealing with it all season as far as shooting. Sometimes it hurts but right now I feel comfortable with it taped up, actually with five but if I end up jamming it or something it kind of takes the pressure off of it. Yeah the pinky is important, but at the end of day, you just got to go on. I'll be alright."

On what happened in the first game against New Mexico:

"I think their two players had really great games and for us, nobody really was able to step up and just take over. Defensively we played hard but for two players on their team to have over 20 it just caused problems for us, for not one of us to really step up and take ownership. So, we're looking to you know, guard them a lot better next game and then offensively like everybody pitching in like we did these past couple games. So yeah, looking forward to it."

On how the team is preparing for competition:

"Yeah, we're just making sure everybody's healthy. Everybody's mentally ready. And we're having really good practices, nobody's taking any days off. Even AG, he is out here practicing. He usually rests but he knows how important these games are. And we're trying to win the league and that's where our mindset is right now. So, they're going to be challenging but we're up for the test."

On what he has heard about the pit:

"I've heard the pit can get really rowdy. I know it's going to be a packed game. I'm really excited. It's going to be a hostile environment for sure. But we're the better team. We're going to go in there and prove it."

On if he prefers playing for the home crowd or if hostile environments motivate him:

"Yeah, I really enjoy it. Last year just having that home crowd after COVID and stuff was really important to me. This year just being the guys that everybody wants to beat, being on the road and playing it's very fun. So, I'm looking forward to the environment, but it can't beat playing at home. So I wish we had it at home these last two games but going there was also special so yeah either or, but definitely playing on a road in a hostile environment is part of the game."

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