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San Diego State Men's Basketball Press Conference
March 7, 2024

Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"A couple of weeks ago, you sit there and go 'Is this season ever going to end?' Then you sit here today and go 'Holy smokes, the season is ending.' You go from all the prep work, all the hours, and now you have one regular season game left against Boise State, a very good team. We are the two teams that were picked to win the league basically and Boise obviously still has a chance to get a piece of the league title. We're too far back at this point probably to have that happen but it's an important game leading into the conference tournament, leading into postseason play. We're excited for the opportunity to play our final game in Viejas arena for the year."

On Jaedon LeDee named as a finalist for the Karl Malone Award:

"I'm so proud of Jaedon and the work he's put in. That extra year has served him well playing basketball. Obviously, he's a grown man amongst grown men out there. He's had a fantastic year. A surprise to many but not a surprise to the coaching staff because we've seen it in him. We saw it in his redshirt year. We saw it last year where he sacrificed part of his game for the good of the team and now, he's playing on full display for the country to see and we're just proud of how he's done in his final season as an Aztec."

On his contract extension:

"I've been here 25 years. I don't know what else I'd do other than live in San Diego. It's a great university. It's a wonderful city and being here 25 years, you get to see all the growth, not just of the basketball program, but of the athletic program, of the University itself, of the city of San Diego. It's just special to spend 25 years anywhere in a lifetime and I've got to spend 25 years here in San Diego. I'm looking forward to a number of others that we can continue to build the brand of San Diego State University and San Diego State basketball."

On the quick turnaround of the conference tournament to the NCAA tournament:

"That's a fine line that you walk. You want to win the conference tournament. But in doing so, do you cost yourself a chance to win in the NCAA tournament? That's every conference there is. Sometimes you make it to that championship game, you're playing three games in three days and then finish on a Sunday and then you might play on a Thursday or Friday. That's hard. We play all season to get into the NCAA tournament. That's why we're trying to win the postseason tournament. That's why we're trying to have a great nonconference regular season so we can play in the main event, the NCAA Tournament and so we're not going to do anything other than to try to win the Mountain West. But the big prize is always the NCAA Tournament, in my opinion."

On the potential to have the first undefeated home season in DI program history:

"It's going to be a great challenge. It's against the best offensive team in the conference. The numbers bear that out for Boise State. We're going to have to be on top of our game defensively and then generate more offense than we have on the road. We've done that at home and hopefully that will continue."

Senior Forward Jaedon LeDee

On the UNLV game:

"Kudos to them. They played a good game. It was their senior night. Sometimes the ball just doesn't fall the way you want it to fall every game. We went on a good five or six-game stretch as a team. They played a good game, and we just have to bounce back on Friday."

On the impact that Coach Dutcher has had on his career:

"He brought me in two and a half, three years ago. Who knows where I'd be or what I'd be doing if he didn't bring me in at the time. I was just a two-time transfer just trying to find some opportunity and find a way. The advice and him being outside of a coach, a father figure to me and the team, it's phenomenal."

On what Elijah Saunders means to the team:

"Elijah, you can see what he's capable of. In the last game coming in he shot the ball really well. He's out there playing with joy. He's out there playing free and that's the biggest thing you want. He was out there playing with confidence. He's going to hopefully continue to do what he does. I have the utmost confidence in him to continue."

On what it would mean to win the Karl Malone Award:

"It'd be an honor. It's a testament to hard work and just being patient. I couldn't really do anything without my teammates, it's not me just out there playing basketball, one on five, it's all five of us working together. It's kind of for all of us."

Senior Guard Lamont Butler

On the atmosphere in Viejas helping the team's home win streak:

"Viejas is always great. It's been great for my whole four years. Well, three years, we had COVID my freshman year so it's been a great three years I've been here, even before I got here. It propels the team to win. It's a hard place for opponents to come in and win."

On his perspective of watching Jaedon's growth:

"Jaedon is dominant. I've seen it the last couple of years. Even when he was on scout team and sitting out, he's just dominant. He's a team player as well. All he cares about is winning. That really spreads throughout the whole team. He's our leader out there. He's scoring. He's just pulling us together and we're following after him and trying to win."

On the impact that Coach Dutcher has had on his career:

"The person he is off the court, he's joking around, he's funny, but he's always giving us advice that stands off the court. That's going to help us in our life. We want to be successful, and I think he's a successful man. He's showing us the way."

On what they need to change from their earlier matchup with Boise State:

"We definitely have to rebound. They're one of the best offensive-rebounding teams in the conference and just play with confidence. The last couple of games, we've been missing shots, but I know everybody gets in the gym and we just have to go out there and play with confidence, go out there, have fun, and make shots."

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