



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement

"I think the last time I sat in here was when I was named head coach. It's kind of a cool moment. So now we sit here today and another first, go into a Final Four and it's exciting. Exciting for me, exciting for our teams, our families, exciting for San Diego State University and exciting for the city of San Diego. So now we have to take advantage of our opportunity. We can't say going to the Final Four is the end all, it's the beginning. So, we have to go try to find a way to win two games and hang a championship banner.

On appreciating how far the program has come:

"I appreciate it every day. I'm one guy that I'm not sitting there obsessing about what's next. I take time like Coach Fisher used to say, smell the roses along the way. So, I enjoy every day, I come to this campus, I walk this campus. Still in amazement I'm working somewhere with palm trees on campus after coming from the Midwest in the snow so I embrace every day and I'm not one to over celebrate, but I enjoy every moment."

On what the team needs to do to win:

"Just be ourselves. I've said from the start, our biggest opponent is always ourselves. If we play to our standard, and someone beats us, we'll tip our hat to them. But we have to play to our standard, so the greatest opponent has always been ourselves."

On what a trip to the Final Four does for recruiting:

"I just think San Diego State's rise to success has been a ride enjoyed by the university too, when we came all those years ago. I think what we've done athletically, basketball, football, all our other sports has helped bolster the image of the university and given it a chance to grow and like I said, we're the front door, we're the public version of the university people see athletics, they see what we do. And then they have a greater appreciation. They get into the university. They look at all the other great things and so the university has risen, our basketball programs risen, and it's kind of coincided. It's been a really special thing."

On what it's like to see the support from public figures:

"We'll take as many fans as we can get. The bandwagon has got room for everybody. And so we embrace the fact that people who didn't know San Diego State University basketball are starting to find out about it. And the national stage gives us an opportunity just to show what a special place this is and what a good program we have."

On what it means to be the second oldest coach to make their Final Four debut:

"Don't take anything for granted. I mean, I went 1988, 89 with Coach Fisher and twice with the Fab Five and you never know if you're going to go again. And I remember back in 88, 89 my dad told me, he was a longtime coach, 'Brian, really great coaches never go one time in a career. Just embrace that moment. Enjoy every minute of it.' And so here we're going in again, and I'm embracing every moment of it and just enjoying it like crazy."

On what it means to have his dad in Houston:

"Yeah, that's the beauty and the inconvenience to the Final Four. That's why you need a great coaching staff because the first couple of days you're dealing with ticket request, travel whether it's your family, your fans, and so when I'm doing all this, I'm doing extra media I've got a great coaching staff getting the team ready, but no, it's going to be great having him there. He was there in 88, 89 and he'll be there again supporting his son and the Aztec basketball team."

On if there are comparisons with FAU's bench:

"100% Nobody's playing over 26 minutes, we play nine guys. No one's averaging over 20 some minutes a game. And the thing is that we're not going to make the mistake some teams make not knowing who Micah Parrish is and he goes for 14 in the first half. We're going to know everybody on that roster. We're going to know all their strengths and weaknesses and we are going to be prepared for all nine or 10 guys they are going to play."

On what he saw in Darrion:

"What he did he did on his own. I mean as coaches I never criticize a shot a guy takes but after a while you miss a few your confidence dips a little and he just fought his way out of his own slump. He just said I'm going to shoot it and I'm going to live with the results. And he shot it and we all live with the results and he shot it magnificently. So, confidence is something no one can give you. It has to come from within and he found a way to fight through some tough stretches. And win us important games, whether it was at New Mexico in the regular season or whether it was in the second round of the NCAA tournament, where he stepped up and made really important timely shots. You know, this is something he did because there's something internally within him that he was able to raise to that next level."

On what it means to him to see former players expressing their support:

"Yeah, most former players get to celebrate their university and their athletic program. But most coaching staff don't make it 24-25 years at the same place. So, when they come back they're supporting coaches that they played for, they played alongside whether it was Dave or Matt, who were young students when they started here. It's still family, their families here, not just their university, not just their athletic program, but the coaches around, Coach Fisher is still here all the time. So they're coming back to embrace their family and family success."

On the challenges of playing in a dome:

"That's a player's question. You know, it's the shooting background. It's further back. Its backgrounds, its distances, sight lines. From a coaching standpoint, it doesn't change. I call the same stuff, run the same stuff, but it's who can adjust and feel comfortable in such a big facility and hopefully we do."

On what it means to be the heart of SDSU:

"It means everything you know, we have tremendous support, and not just this year, every year since we've been here. It's just grown and grown whether the arena is sold out. We're embraced by the university. We have the greatest student section on the West Coast. And it just grows. I mean now that we're getting more of a national stage, it's people that don't know anything about San Diego State that are trying to appreciate though how hard our kids play, we play the right way. We do the right things. And I'm saying we got between walk ons and scholarship players. We got seven players in the business school

here at San Diego State. We have student athletes there that value degrees that represent themselves, their families and our university in the right way and so everybody can embrace that and that's what this university does and embraces the way we do things. That we do things the right way and we win the right way."

On if he has reflected with Coach Fisher how far things have come since they first started:

"Not really, we talk so often on a daily basis whether it's in person or on the phone that it is just an ongoing conversation about everything. So no, we haven't sat back and looked back and said, 'Can you imagine what this was 20 some years ago.' So no, we don't have that conversation."

On Coach Fisher's reaction:

"So happy and it's a shared vision, it's not my vision. It was our vision all those years ago. And so a lot of people have them very few times you get to actually recognize your vision and we've done that now we have to go out and finish the job, we recruit saying we're going to be good enough to win a national championship now we have to find a way to do it and obviously the bar has been raised and so the standard is to get back. So we're going to enjoy this one but we're always going to fight to maintain the culture and the reputation of this program."

On what FAU looks like on tape:

"Yeah, they got the most wins in the country. That would be like us with our 30-2 team. People ask them, do they look like a Power Five team? We were 30 and two and we had the best record in the country, and they're the same way right now. They've got the best record in the country and they have to be respected for that. That doesn't just happen, they have to go out and beat a lot of good teams to make that happen. And now they've shown in March that that record wasn't against just any competition, it's against good competition and they continue to get better as the tournament goes on. And that's what we're doing."

On if he sees FAU players as recruiting misses by bigger schools:

"Yeah, I mean, obviously they did a great job of evaluating talent like we do. They're not five star recruits. They're guys that have potential that have something within them that they get better over their careers and they're still young. I mean, this is a young team, think they got one senior out there. It's a lot of young kids too. So, they're embracing their moment in time."

On if there is something shifting in college basketball with no McDonald's All Americans in the Final Four:

"Well, the McDonald's all Americans they're only most likely staying one year of college. So, it probably has to be a freshman that gets there. Most of these McDonald's All Americans are leaving after one year so it's not like there's a four or five year pool of McDonald's all Americans trying to play so most of them are one and done. We've got there because of experience, and we've got really good freshmen. Miles and Elijah are as good of freshman that we've ever had here, but we have a lot of good veteran players in front of them. So their time is going to come and people are going to go, 'Wow, where did this kid come from?' They're really good players, but tough to get on the floor for the Aztecs this year as a freshman."

On what FAU does well that might give them problems:

"It's always a three-point shot, isn't it? I mean, a team runs into a night where they make 8, 9, 10, 11 threes. It's a long night. So we got to make sure that we run at night and they make and they have to be contested. And then if they make a contestant one, then you're saying they're really good. So, we have to make sure we can test all those shots and hopefully they don't make enough where they can beat us."

On what is said in the locker room to rev the players up:

"I don't think I have to rev them up now. So that might be a midweek game against Wyoming or something in Laramie that I've got to rev them up, but the final four if I got to rev them up, I got the wrong group of guys in the locker room."

On if he has done anything different this run compared to previous tournaments:

"No, we got to Louisville and I used a lot of Muhammad Ali quotes because my wife went to the Muhammad Ali museum, took a lot of photos of some of the quotes in there and said send me those and I used some of them. We were in Louisville and talked about confidence and being fearless and just finding something that's relevant at the time to what we're doing and using it as a way to motivate them."

On why he does the trust fall:

"Trust me, the good news is losing coaches don't do it because I don't know if their team would catch them. But when you win and you cut down nets, your odds are better that they're going to catch you so I did it at the conference tournament, maybe three years ago when it was a COVID year no one else was in there. It was just the spur of the moment. Now this year, Nate said you going to do the trust fall Coach because he was there. I said you want me to do it, he said Yeah, I want you to do it. I said okay, I'm going to do it. So, you just make sure you have enough guys and catch me, I'm gaining weight. So, they had enough guys there to make sure they didn't drop me."

San Diego State Junior Guard Lamont Butler

On the 24 hours after the game:

"The next day was pretty fun too; we were still just on a high celebrating. We went out, went to the beach, and just chilled. It was great to see all the fans coming up to us and congratulating us. It was a really good day, and we are ready to compete now."

On staying focused:

"We know we can win this thing (the National Championship) and we know we have got to focus on one game at a time. We got to focus on Florida Atlantic next and it's everybody's dream so we're going to get to it for sure."

On the other San Diego sports teams support:

"That's for sure amazing. It's amazing. I was just talking to one of the teammates about how we were at the Padres game rooting for them and now they're rooting for us. It's amazing, we're going to keep putting on for the city."

On Darrion going from struggling on offense to being MVP in the south region:

"I feel like he just kept the same mentality. He knew the work that he put in, the balance that we had, and practiced throughout the year. In the summer, we were really going at it. We prepared each other for this moment. And I knew he would come through big for us. I'm glad to show him the work he's put in and just how good he is."

On his emotions leading up to the game:

"Excitement for sure. Confident that we can get this done. But for sure excitement and happiness."

On this Final Four being one of the lowest combined rankings in history:

"It just shows how good college basketball is becoming. Every team has guys that can go off. Seeds only matter when it comes to the tournament. Anything can happen and we're just fortunate to be in this position and we're going to keep going."

On what about Florida Atlantic might give you trouble on the court:

"They're a really good team, they haven't lost much this year, the most wins in school history. They play very hard. They are kind of similar to us with the chip on the shoulder they have. It's going to be a really good game and we just got to focus up and get the job done."

On not complaining about not having as much as teams in power conferences:

"We've all worked for the position that we're in now. I feel like we've never gotten handouts, we don't complain about the position that we're in now. We're just going to keep just putting our heads down, staying humble and trying to win."

On his relationship with Darrion since he's been in the program:

"As soon as he came in, we started hanging out and it was kind of with the team, but it was hanging out. Then every day we were going at it. We didn't know if we were going to be playing together, starting together, or one coming off the bench, but we were just going at it, just making each other better. Like I said, it's shown throughout this whole March Madness, the improvement that we've been making throughout the year and now we pretty much like this (inseparable). It's just going to keep getting better. We're going to try to make it to the championship and live our dream."

On Houston and playing in a football stadium:

"I've been to Houston one time; I went on a visit to Rice University. Houston was really nice. I loved it out there so I can't wait to go back. It's going to be a fun trip. Playing in a football stadium, it's going to be different, but who cares? It's the final four. We're going to be ready."

On what it means to be considered the heart of SDSU:

"It's great. It's a great feeling. It's kind of awesome just being outside and a bunch of people come up to you saying that they're supporting us. We need all the support we can have and we're going to try to win this thing for them."

On how important it is to bring a win to San Diego:

"Very important, very important. That's our goal. That's the goal that has been set from the start of the year. It's very important, very exciting. And we can't wait."

San Diego State Senior Guard Darrion Trammell

On the 24 hours after the game:

"Yeah, we had a good day at the beach as a team, just to kind of relax and try to just feel a little bit of normalcy. But yeah, it just felt good to have a lot of love from all the fans, the city of San Diego showing us love. But yeah, we have two more games, and we have to get back to work."

On what they know about FAU:

"We know they set the record for wins in their school. We know they play fast. They play 9 deep, and they play hard with a chip on their shoulder just like us. So, it's just going to be a dogfight. It's going to be a competitive game."

On elaborating about his broadcast interview:

"It was a lot. Um, I mean, it was skill. I couldn't shoot. I was too short. I didn't have a motor, or they didn't see my potential and things like that. And then I went to postgrad junior college, you name it. So, it's just been a heck of a journey and was definitely a blessing to be here. And I mean, playing in the Final Four today."

On his emotions now:

"I wouldn't say I'm the man but yeah, definitely. I feel like I have a little bit more confidence. Just like I said, in the interview earlier, it's all about believing in yourself. But I mean, we have high hopes and high dreams as a team, and we want to win a national title. So, it's all about just taking a step back and realizing that we have more work to do."

On what his family and friends have said to him:

"They've been telling me I deserve this. That's what I've been thinking about throughout the entire tournament. This is something they feel that I deserve. They saw all the hard work I put in and just their support. I mean, it just got me through it. So, it's just a blessing to have people like that in your life."

On how they are staying focused:

"Oh, yeah, just about being in the moment. Can't really look too far ahead. Take it day by day and just realize all the work that and all the ups and downs of the season you've been through and just do what you can to give yourself a good shot at winning a national title which is just taking it day by day and working as hard as you can."

On seeing support from other San Diego teams:

"Yeah, it's all love in San Diego. When we got back, I mean we had fans outside at 1 am. So, I mean that's all that's what it's about. And that's pretty much what we do it for, so we appreciate all the support from everyone."

On if they have taken the time to reflect on being the first team in school history to the final four:

"I will say not at all. I think we're really, really locked in on just what we have in front of us right now. We really have a shot to really win this thing. And I think it's going to take a little bit for it to really set in just to really understand what we're really doing."

On their emotions leading up to this:

"Yeah, I would say a little bit anxious. I mean, I would love to just play tomorrow. Play today. So, it's just about just attacking each day like we have practice today. We have to bring a certain intensity that is required just to carry on to Houston."

On what concerns them about FAU:

"Yeah, it's going to be a dogfight. I feel like we saw them play really hard. I feel like their motto was out playing teams, and we just can't let that be what happens on Saturday. It's all the little things like diving on loose balls, making extra efforts for offensive rebounds. It's got to be all the little things in the game like this."

On if they have been to Houston and playing in a football stadium:

"This is actually going to be my first time in Houston. The only thing I really hear about is the food. So, I'm kind of excited to try some food out there. But yeah, I mean, it's going to be a little different playing in a football stadium, but I mean ultimately if that's where we have to play, we have to play if we have to get a shot at winning the national title."

On what about their backgrounds made them who they are:

"Yes, it's all about being grateful. Especially like when you work for everything and just the blessings you receive from it. It's kind of hard to complain about the little things and I mean, we wake up every day and we're here playing basketball. So it's just a blessing, just appreciating life."

On if there is a feeling that they are representing the underdogs:

"Yeah, I think that's what pretty much carried us throughout this tournament is just the underdog mentality, the chip on our shoulder. I mean, we're going to work for everything, everything we have, and that's just the culture at San Diego State. Just a bunch of hard-working guys who really attack what they want. And it's all about just the mentality."

On if he knew right away that San Diego state was the right fit:

"Yeah, at my recruitment lunch, it just felt so right. We just were talking, and it just felt so natural and the conversations we were having basketball conversations and just talking about life and other things, just talking about the culture. It was just the perfect fit for me and I kind of knew after that lunch I was pretty set on SDSU."

On what clicked during the tournament:

"I think it was about being myself and just finding my spots a little bit more. I think every player who transfers or goes into a new team kind of have to find where they fit in and have new spots. But ultimately just not really thinking about it. Just giving whatever my team needed for us to win. It's win or go home so I felt like I had to leave nothing out. Leave no regrets. And just play basketball."

On playing through the criticisms:

"Yeah, that was something that I pretty much was battling through the entire season. My teammates and my coaches have supported me and just let me know like the opinions that really matter are inside our circle. And the people around me were giving me the support I needed through it all. I never stopped believing in myself and never stopped working. So, I mean, you can't really let things like that get to you. It was just all about staying to myself and just trying to win."

On what it means to them to be at the heart of what SDSU is:

"Oh yeah, it's just extra motivation. Just to have it be bigger than yourself. For the team, for the city of San Diego, for San Diego State. Just knowing that just adds a little bit more extra motivation for us."

On how important it is to bring a win to San Diego:

"Yeah, I mean, you could just feel it like when we're around each other that we're not satisfied. And it's all about bringing one back to San Diego, especially for the first time ever. We just know how much bigger the snake can get so I mean, we're just excited about that."

-SDSU-