

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 10, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

## San Diego State Aztecs

## Head Coach Brian Dutcher

## Darrion Trammell

## Keshad Johnson

### Postgame Press Conference

San Diego State 64, San Jose State 49

**BRIAN DUTCHER:** Just the culture of our program. All these guys will tell you, when they come to San Diego State, they're told, if you defend at a high level, if you don't like playing defense, don't come to this program, and then we'll let you play with great freedom offensively.

I think Darrion showed that tonight. Our team showed it defensively, but Darrion guarded, and I thought he played free offensively today. He was out hunting his shot, and I didn't mind because it was going in.

So we play hard on defense, and that's why we've always had the success we've had. We defend and we rebound. Then we play with great freedom on offense, and we make enough shots to win games.

But I think everyone would have to agree that our defense won us the game tonight. We're proud of how we defended. Now we have the hardest challenge of all and even harder by our opponents for tomorrow. We're playing at 3:00 tomorrow afternoon. So, I told them as much as they want to see their families after the game, we're going to take advantage of these three hours. We're going to go back to the hotel, get our treatment on our bodies, and get ourselves ready to go for a challenging championship game tomorrow at 3:00.

**Q. Darrion, you know, at the end of the first half you made a three, landed awkwardly. You went limping into the locker room. You came out, wrapped the calf. You know, you looked fatigued in the halftime warmups, but then you went to the referee. What did you say to the referee?**



**DARRION TRAMMELL:** I'm not even sure what I said. During halftime? I was telling them about my landing. I feel like a lot of my shots I'm not being able to land, and I just have to let them know I'm not trying to show that or flop or anything like that, but I feel like I'm not being able to land. That's all.

**Q. Just a follow-up, Darrion. How is your overall health, and what do you think tomorrow will be like?**

**DARRION TRAMMELL:** I'm good. It just hurt for a little bit. Our trainer got me right, wrapped me up. But now, like Dutch said, we have to get back to the hotel, get some treatment, and make sure our bodies are right. So we have to take advantage of the three hours that we have.

**Q. For you, Darrion. Zero last game but a game high 15 today, and it looked like you were battling through that calf injury. What has been the key in working past the adversity you faced this season and early into this tournament?**

**DARRION TRAMMELL:** Just staying confident. My teammates and my coaches, they've been telling me just keep shooting, just keep going, keep going. They put the ultimate trust in me, so I appreciate that from them.

Yeah, like I said, just take the shots. When you are in a slump, the only way you can get out of it is to shoot out of it, really. They made it easier on me by putting the confidence in me to keep doing that.

**Q. Keshad, you've been on some great defensive teams in the four years you've been at San Diego State, but have you guys played any better defense than you did in the first half tonight?**

**KESHAD JOHNSON:** We got a lot of great defensive performances, and this is just another one to add on to that long list. We all came connected. Kudos to San Jose State. They do a great job with the ball screens, and we just had to contain them. We had the right game plan. Kudos to our coaches to get us right mentally and make sure we knew the test that we had ahead of us.

So we were just ready with everything that came with today's game. That showed in our defensive performance.

**Q. Keshad, both games against San Jose State this year you've had a lot of success offensively. What about this matchup really lets you get into your offensive game?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: I guess -- I don't know. Kudos to my teammates. They all found me. Darrion, Lamont. They know where I'm at. They know where I'm at before I be there, so thank my point guards, thank for all my wings. They miss on a double-team, he found me. We're just a team that got a great chemistry, and it's March so we all know where each other going to be at, and that's just shown on the court. It just so happened to be San Jose State every time.

**Q. Between the games from yesterday, today, winning both then the game coming up tomorrow. How do you guys feel so far and what's going on through your head?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: We just -- right now we're just locked in. We're just locked in. You know, it's kind of hard to play three games in three back-to-back days. Each game is physical. Everybody is playing their hardest. Win or go home. We're just pretty much locked in. We're not really dwelling on anything like that, so we're just going to go back to the drawing boards and learn and try to get the job done tomorrow.

DARRION TRAMMELL: Yeah, it's a quick turnaround, so we have to take one thing at a time. Like you said, we have to get back to the hotel and get our treatment first and then we have to watch film. It's just about taking one thing at a time, and can't get too far ahead of ourselves.

**Q. Darrion or Keshad, just obviously your identity in the defense and what you guys have done all year. Omari Moore as Player of the Year, basically, just mentally what do you guys do extra just to show what you guys can do? It doesn't matter who the Player of the Year is.**

DARRION TRAMMELL: Make his life hard. He is a great player. He likes to get downhill. He uses his screens very well. He makes reads very well. Our whole thing was we were swinging switch-five, so make his life hard and make all his catches hard. We like to be pressing the whole game, high hands. Just the little things that you have to do with great players. Then, ultimately, they're going to make baskets. He is going to make plays. I feel like we made it as hard as possible.

KESHAD JOHNSON: Omari Moore, he is a great player. He is a pro prospect. You can see that when he play out there on the court.

So he is best at getting downhill and making his teammates better. So the reason why we were switching is so we didn't have to go through him getting downhill.

We just made life hard on him. He is the leader of the team, so we just had to do a great job, and shout out to the coaches for getting us ready for that assignment.

**Q. Keshad, you guys have been incredible getting to the final of this tournament. All six years that Brian has been head coach, 13 in the last 15, but you've also struggled to win these. Only two of the last nine you've actually won the championship. Why do you think that is, and what might you guys do differently or approach differently when you get to this final?**

KESHAD JOHNSON: Everybody play their best when this time in March comes, so every game is just a hard-fought game. It's just everybody is playing their best, and we just have to come out with the win.

Like I said, we have to go back to the drawing boards and get prepared to give our all like it's the last game we're ever going to play.

**Q. For both of you. Yesterday Butler scored 16 points. Bradley 14 points. You both split 15 tonight. How does it feel to not have to rely on one player each game? You know, especially the importance of the tournament.**

KESHAD JOHNSON: Coach does do a great job of letting us know it can be any one of our nights each and every day that we go out there and play. So we know how talented each other are, and we don't dwell if we have a bad game. We just come back and maybe next game is going to be our game.

Like you see yesterday with Matt Bradley game, today was me and Darrion's game, and that's just the beauty of our team. It's our depth. That's going to be a great advantage for us later on in March.

DARRION TRAMMELL: Like he said, it's our depth. We've been talking about that all year. I mean, it's that time where it's going to show. Like he said earlier, we had Lamont and Matt had a good game last night, and then we had me and Keshad tonight. It can be like that throughout the whole March.

One thing we all do is defend, which is great, but



offensively it could be anyone's night any time.

THE MODERATOR: We thank you, gentlemen. We'll now entertain questions for Coach.

**Q. Coach, it seemed like in the first half the team made a concerted effort to take the ball to the basket. You guys only took seven threes. Was that the game plan going in, trying to beat them getting to the paint?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: We've tried all year to become better at turning these ball screens or handoffs into the paint, putting pressure on the defense, and then making the right play. Whether it's a dump down to the post play or kick out to the perimeter for a shot or another attack, but getting downhill is important. We try to do it. We try to get as many paint touches as we can.

Sometimes it's easier. Sometimes it's harder, but that's the game plan. Try to get a paint touch and then make something positive happen.

**Q. Coach, in the first half the refs were letting you play a little physical. On drives to the rim they weren't calling as many fouls. Did you tell anything to the guys during huddle, we can play a little more physical here and help the defensive intensity?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: You adjust to however the game is being officiated, and those are good officials. They're calling a semifinal game. They're all three very good officials.

Everybody calls a game different, so this game was physical, it was aggressive, and we had to play through contact just like San Jose did.

So I thought we did a good job of adjusting to a good officiating crew.

**Q. Your three leading scorers last game -- Bradley, Butler, and LaDee combined for 39. Today just 17. What does it say about the depth around this entire team?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I told them I was looking at a locker room where I think nine different players had led us in scoring this year. I said, I don't know whose night it's going to be, but if we play the right way, we'll have enough of you that make the right plays and put up points for us to win.

So our depth is our strength, so I think everybody on the team has led us in scoring. So tonight it was Darrion and Keshad. It might be Nate. Could be Jaedon. Anybody. Anybody on our team is capable of scoring the ball

because we play the right way. We share it. We're not a one guy that we go to constantly the same guy. We probably play team basketball. We move it around, and whoever is having that hot night, it seems to find them.

**Q. Playing in a neutral court tonight, but it didn't sound very neutral. What did you think about the crowd, and how much does that help you guys?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Our Aztec fans love coming to Vegas, and you could tell. It was the first game at noon on Thursday. They were here. A lot of times they're waiting until they can get through work and then come on Friday and Saturday for the weekend, but we had it full of Aztec fans on Thursday and more today. It will be a hard ticket tomorrow. We will fill the building with Aztec fans tomorrow.

**Q. What is it like for you to watch Tim Miles do what he has done in programs he has run. Also, did you see something like this coming this year?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Oh, Tim Miles is a really good coach. We've been doing battle since Coach Fisher and he were going against each other at San Diego State and Colorado State. Tim knows what he is doing. He has done a magnificent job. That's why he is Coach of the Year. He has exceeded expectations and put a good team together that plays the right way, and they enjoy playing together. I can't say enough good things about the job Tim has done at San Jose, and I can't wait to see what the future holds.

**Q. Dutch, same question I asked to Keshad. Is there a different feel about this tournament and your chances in the final given that you guys haven't had a ton of success? A lot of success getting there, but not a ton when you get there. Will you try anything different?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: You know, I can't even remember all those games, to be honest with you. I just know they're hard-fought. We're asking these kids to do an impossible task. To play under 24 hours from completing a game. Last night we had the late game -- or last year. Got back to the hotel at midnight and played the next day at 3:00.

So we got a couple more hours rest. So you're going to see two teams that play hard as heck, but probably not at their very best. You can't play at your very best with that kind of fatigue. It ends up just being gritty and gutty, and someone makes enough plays to win.

So that's March basketball, and I told the guys if we play to our capabilities and someone beats us, then we're going to tip our hat, but we have to play to our capabilities.

If someone bounces up and makes shots, and we get open shots and they don't go in, we'll live with that. The thing we don't want to do is not play up to our capabilities.

Then that's basketball. March is for players. That's what I say. So someone who we play tomorrow, either our team or the other team will step up and make timely plays, and that will be the ball game tomorrow.

**Q. I think you might lead the nation in flops. Have you figured out what that call is because that looked like Keshad got nailed in the chest.**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, it's a hard call. The thing is we all know what it is. A guy goes down, and there's not enough contact. It's a flop. But, you know, sometime it's getting towards the end of the year, and you're trying to see if they're calling it as much as they did at the beginning of the year.

So I had no problem with them calling a flop on Keshad as long as they're calling it at both ends. That's all you ever want. You want consistency in officiating, and I thought we had that. So I didn't have a problem with it. I like the fact we rebounded the miss, and they missed the free-throw. We got the ball, and, you know, that worked out good.

Thanks, everyone.

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