



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State vs. Cal State Fullerton Postgame Quotes

San Diego State 66, Cal State Fullerton 56

Viejas Arena | San Diego, Calif.

Dec. 8, 2021

### San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

#### Opening Statement:

"I know I've said this before and I'm gonna say it again. It's hard to win a college basketball game. I don't care where you're playing, who you're playing, it's hard to win a game. And to our credit, we found a way to win. Everybody deals with adversity. You know, not having Lamont (Butler); Tairou's (Daibate) out; AG (Aguek Arop), he couldn't go. At pregame meal today, Josh (Tomaic) said he didn't think he could play because his hip was bothering him. He missed two days of practice and just went to walk-through today and he found a way to gut it out and give us valuable minutes when Keshad got in foul trouble. So, can we play better? 100 percent we can play better. But did we play good enough to win tonight? Yes, we did. And so, I'm happy with that. And we'll grow. We'll grow as a team because these kids are coachable. They want to get better. They look to the coaches for advice and help and sometimes we're more than willing to give it, maybe too much. But that's coaching and they're coachable kids. Now we have nine days in between games to grow our program to get a better feel for each other on the court being shorthanded without Lamont and find a way to get better (when we) play a very good Saint Mary's team in Phoenix after the break."

#### On what made the game so close in the second half:

"You know we played a pretty good first half. We turned it over too much. We had 10 turnovers and we could have had more separation. I thought we had a lot of fastbreak opportunities we didn't capitalize on when they were struggling. But when you let teams hang around, they can get back in the game. And so, we kind of let them get a little back in it early in the second half, and then Nate went out with his back. And so, now Keshad's in foul trouble, Nate's got a bad back and I got (Adam) Seiko at the power forward with four guards in the center. I can play with that lineup, but it cuts the playbook down some, so we can't run as much, and they took advantage of that with Nate out of the game. They cut it to maybe one point with him out, then we got Nate back in and kind of built it up again. They made a furious rally at the end. (Tray) Maddox hit back to back twos and then a big step back three. And so, it's just what you fear as a coach at the end. You go against a hot hand and no matter how you're guarding him, he's capable of bouncing up and making shots. He was hot. And so, we didn't get discouraged. Adam did a good job denying him, making it harder on him and I don't think he had another basket down the stretch. Adam shut him out down the stretch with help from his teammates. And then we made enough free throws to kind of put the game away. So, games like this are good for you. You know, you want every game where you can get a 12-14 point lead, then it's 16 to be comfortable. But we know the reality of it. We know when conference (teams) gets here, we're going to have a dozen of these games. It's going to go down in the last two or three minutes. And so, it's valuable to play in games like this. As a coach, you want to win every game, you want to win it handily and comfortable. Basketball is not a very comfortable game at times. And so, it wasn't comfortable tonight. But we held we held in there together, we made important timely plays and came away with the victory."

#### On what a victory like this does for the team's confidence:

"I think it helps. You know, Adam, obviously (he made) three big three-point shots today. That was huge. We know we can go to Matt (Bradley) for isolation basketball, but at the same time, he made a couple really nice passes in that stretch to his teammates. So not only can he score, he's (also) a good playmaker and that's what you want from a go-to player down the stretch. Trey (Pulliam) shook off an average first half and then really scored the ball during that stretch in the second half when no one else could score. He was second in rebounds with seven. Too many turnovers, five turnovers, but that's a by-product of fatigue and trying to get used to playing this many minutes. He's going to have to play this many until Lamont comes back. When I was at Illinois as a young grad assistant, everyone used to (tell) us, man your teams are the greatest in-shape team I've ever seen. Well, we only were playing six guys, so they had to get in shape to play that long. Right now, Trey's gonna be in the best shape of his life because he'll be out on that floor."

**On if he's resigned to the fact that there will be games like this for the rest of the year because of the way the team is built:**

"Yeah, games are always going to be close. We have to do a better job on the break. I thought we ran pretty good, but we didn't take advantage of those situations. So, we got up and down the floor and, you know, we could've broken the game open early in the first half. We were getting stops and running out, but we weren't finishing. So, we have to finish some of those opportunities. I thought we took a lot of off-balance early shots on the break. I told Trey and Josh, I'll let you shoot any shot you want, but when we get back-to-back air balls, then obviously they're not great shots, or you would hit the rim, or they'll be a little closer. So, we're shooting air balls. We have to get better like we did at the end, make a play for someone else when it's pass, pass, guys wide open. We have to start seeing those opportunities and making more of those plays. And I think we will, I think they're willing passers. They're good teammates, so we just have to show them. We have to grow our game."

**On Nathan Mensah:**

Obviously, his back's bothering him; he's missed practice. Today, he went to block a shot and came out. I don't know, his back tightened or spasmed on him and so he left. But I told Nate, I didn't think he was active enough in the first half, like rolling to the basket and making enough plays. In the second half he wasn't rewarded, but he was really active. He got offensive rebounds; he got his hands on a lot of balls, he just couldn't finish them. So I told him, don't get discouraged. Nate, if you're that active, then good things will happen. I thought his activity in the second half was really high. I thought he made a lot of plays. He just didn't finish a lot of them. I don't know how many minutes Nate played tonight, but that's probably a high for his career. I haven't looked at them, but that was a lot of minutes for Nate. I thought his activity was really good. And so, sometimes you're not rewarded. But if you keep playing that way, and you're active like that, eventually you're going to be rewarded for playing like that. I thought, Nate, I told him I thought your activity was way better in the second half."

## San Diego State Senior Guard Trey Pulliam

**On having a 14-point lead and then all of a sudden competing in a close game:**

"The main thing for us is just staying together, I think and fighting through diversity. I think it was big for us to get a win with the team coming back like that having the big league in the beginning and for us to stay together as a team. That'd be the main takeaway from the game."

**On why he thought the game was as close as it was?**

"They hit some tough shots. No. 2 for them (Trey Maddox Jr) hit some tough shots. We came in at halftime talking about the offense and trying to get into more of a rhythm. I feel like we played well offensively in the second half. Just sometimes they get tough shots, tough threes and tough twos. That's probably what it is."

**On Matt Bradley's performance:**

"He comes out strong all the time. He's always in attack mode looking to score. Teams come on and just play on him differently, so I mean, he has to figure out how to attack and get into the spots."

## San Diego State Senior Guard Adam Seiko

**On his health and scoring a season-high of 11 points:**

"My leg feels much better. I was down for a while. I didn't expect to be out for those two games. But you know, shout out to [Athletic Trainer] Sergio [Ibarra] and the treatment he's been giving me. I'm back to 100 percent so it feels good to go out there and feel healthy and also hit my shots out there."

**On how he injured his leg:**

"I took a knee on a screen. We were playing Georgetown. It was like a charley horse times 10. It was just a bad area. Usually, I'm able to play through stuff [injuries] but it was one injury that I wasn't able to play through. I'm just glad to be back with the team and the guys and I'm glad they're supporting me through it and everything."

**On the team being in need of a shooter and his playing that key role in the offense:**

"Just by staying the course. I can't get in my head too much and let previous games affect me. I understand I was trying to shoot well in the summer and coming back this year, I didn't shoot it well early, but my teammates be picking me up and my coaches. Knowing that I'm the best shooter on this team. I just got to keep letting go and be confident. It was nice to see it [the ball] go through the hoop today, it was very encouraging."

## **Cal State Fullerton Head Coach Dedrique Taylor**

"I thought our guys battled tonight, and we gave ourselves a chance to come out with a win. We played them even in the second half, and really came out strong after the break. Tray (Maddox Jr.) really put the team on his back down the stretch, and came up with some huge buckets for us. Obviously the turnovers hurt us overall, but there were some positives to take away from this game. Give San Diego State credit, they forced us into situations we didn't want to be and forced us to make plays."

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