



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State-Utah State Postgame Quotes

SDSU head coach Brian Dutcher

On tonight's performance and bouncing back after the Wyoming game:

"Good bounce back game for the Aztecs, getting over the disappointment from the Wyoming game. I told the kids, life is 10% about what happens and 90% how you deal with it. We had two good days of practice and we looked like it today when we played—we got better at both ends of the floor defensively, and were finally able to contain a team that drives a ball which has been an issue for us all year. We closed out well, kept them in front of us and did a really good job defensively. Offensively, I think we are making progress, we are trying to get paint touches whether it is a post-touch for Malik (Pope), Kam (Rooks), or Jalen (McDaniels) or penetration into the paint where we kick it to other people. I think the more we continue to play for each other, the better this team will get. That makes me really happy as a coach. Quick turnaround, 10% is the win and now 90% is getting ready for Colorado State on Tuesday."

On turnovers in the first half:

"They were really important, we wanted to press and we haven't a lot this year but we know that Utah State is such a great set-play team. Coach Duryea does such a great job running their offense from the bench that we thought we could cut the head off the offense by pressing. The turnovers were a bonus on that. We definitely wanted to disrupt the rhythm on calling plays the press definitely helped us disrupt them offensively."

On variety in defensive schemes:

"It's personnel-driven. I think we are a better pressing team when Jeremy (Hemsley) is in because he puts so much ball pressure and turns the ball. Malik, Jalen, and Max (Montana) are good up there because they are athletic and long, and when they trap the ball it is tough to go over them. In the past, we had players with the length. It is something we have had and just haven't put out there, a by-product of players injured, hurt and sick. When we have a full roster and can keep running guys in with fresh legs in the game, then it allows us to press more. I thought our bench was good today, spelling the starters' minutes and letting them get fresh and they were fresh down the stretch."

On Montaque Gill-Caesar:

"[Montaque] has had injuries his entire time here, whether it was knee, hip, back, I feel bad for him for that. Hopefully he will take this time to get healthy and he will get and San Diego State degree at the end of this semester, and be a proud San Diego State graduate."

SDSU junior forward Max Montana

On how it felt to get the win tonight:

"It felt pretty good. The injury I had—I didn't realize it first, but it kind of set me back a little bit further than I had expected. I thought I could just come back and everything would kind of be the same, but I'm finally getting my legs back, finally getting my rhythm and still not really there. I'm just trying to do the best I can to help this team. I felt pretty good tonight so that's a good start."

On playing two good halves of basketball:

"I think a lot of teams this year have been zoning us, and we have been doing a few different things to attack the zones. I think we're getting way more comfortable with finding the gaps and doing different things. Tonight we did kind of an X-through, where the two guards would cut to the corners, kind of getting movement in the zone and finding different ways to attack it. I thought we did a great job."

On how the team meeting following the loss to Wyoming and the last two days of practice helped the team today:

"After a loss like that, we kind of just figure out what was going to work for us and what is not, but one thing that has to be constant is us being happy for each other, happy for each other's success and just going out there having fun and doing all the constants we have to do to win games. There's going to be a lot of variables winning basketball games, but if you remain with the constants, you have a great shot at winning every game."

On Montaque Gill-Cesar:

"[Montaque] is my roommate so I know the kid very well. That's my brother. Since he's been here, he's had a bunch of injuries going on with him. I think he made the decision for himself just to kind of focus on getting his body right and then he'll go from there. It's hard man, injuries after injuries. I've been there. It messes with your body but it also messes with you mentally, so that's a huge thing for him. I wish him the best—that kid's a killer on the court. He's going to do big things later on in life, I'm sure of that."

SDSU senior forward Malik Pope**On how the team meeting following the loss to Wyoming and the last two days of practice helped the team today:**

"It definitely brings everyone together. You talk and figure out where you went and messed up, so I feel like it helped us, definitely."

On Montaque Gill-Cesar:

"As someone who also had his share of injuries, I definitely have to wish him the best. He's a very strong, strong-willed person, so I feel like he has a really bright future. He's still got a lot of room for improvement."

On what he saw from his teammates tonight:

"Playing together as a unit, finding each other. Definitely not rushing the game. Today we kind of executed a lot better inside out and figured out where they were lacking. We definitely did a great job defensively."

Utah State head coach Tim Duryea**Opening statement:**

"Give credit to (San Diego State). I was real impressed with the way they played. They had us on our heels. I thought they drove the ball really well and made a lot of plays for each other, which resulted in open shots and they did a good job knocking them down. The second half they got a hold of the offensive glass and we gave up too many offensive rebounds. Our story in the first half was all the turnovers. We shoot 50 percent, but we go into halftime and they'd attempted 12 more shots than we did just because of our turnovers. When we didn't turn it over, we actually did a pretty good job offensively. Obviously 19 turnovers is about nine too many for us and we can't afford to do that."

On San Diego State's length:

"(Their length) bothers everybody, but I thought when we played the way we have to play we got a lot of good shots. But their length bothers everybody. It's something you've got to get used to. We settled into some good stretches offensively, but we did not rebound or defend near well enough to come in here and win. You have to do those two things and obviously can't turn the ball over. In the three areas that we stress and focus on we did not do the job."

On playing a team coming off a deflating road loss:

"I thought they played with a lot of balance and a lot of urgency. Obviously they were the desperate team tonight. We go back home Wednesday (against Fresno State) and we're in that same situation. You have to defend your home court like crazy in this league because road wins are going to be tough. They are really valuable when you get them. You have to take a swing every night, but you can't come in here especially and make the mistakes that we did tonight."

Utah State sophomore guard Sam Merrill**Thoughts on the game:**

"We knew that (San Diego State) was going to come in with some energy having lost the other night (at Wyoming) and needing a win. I thought they punched us in the mouth pretty well. That's a good basketball team. We didn't respond and that's what happened."

On trying to cut a 14-point halftime lead to single-digits as quickly as possible:

"We wanted to chip away. Offensively we had 13 turnovers in the first half which obviously put us in a bind. We got it going a little bit offensively, but we couldn't string enough defensive stops together. That's why it stayed in double-digits the entire game."

On defending a team like San Diego State:

"They are a good team and have a lot of weapons. Our focus just has to be trying to take away what they are trying to do, which is getting the ball inside in the paint, no matter who it is with their big guards or their bigs. We did not do a great job of that. That's why we gave up 80."

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