



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State-Eastern Illinois Postgame Quotes

SDSU Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"Good three-point shooting can make you look like a good coach and Matt Mitchell made me look like a genius today. He shot the ball in at a level we haven't seen for a while: 7-for-11 from three. I told the team I'm so happy for Matt, but he couldn't have gotten any of those baskets if it wasn't for his teammates. They found him every time he was open, they penetrated selflessly and kicked the ball to the perimeter when he was open and they made his job easy. We had 32 baskets and 21 of them were assisted on. So that's playing basketball at a really high level. We were a little careless in the first half with the ball. We had ten turnovers and when we took better care of the ball in the second half, we only had three turnovers. We were really able to extend the lead at that point. I'm proud of our effort and it's a step in the right direction."

On if this game is what he expected from Mitchell this early in his career:

"We knew when we got Matt that he was special. He was Inland [Empire] player of the year, much in the same mode of Kawhi (Leonard) and Jamaal Franklin, so he's got a great resume. He played in a state championship and on a CIF title team, so he's used to winning. But he's still a freshman, so it takes time to get your rhythm and to adjust to the college game a little bit. But he has the talent and the work ethic to be a really good player."

On continuing to start Mitchell despite his early struggles:

"When Max went down, I had started Jeremy that game and I didn't want to bring all freshmen off the bench. I thought Matt was playing at a pretty good level even though he wasn't making shots. I mean, you all saw some of the passes he made today. He has an ability to find the open man. So I thought his feel for the game and the way he played, it was good, he just couldn't get a shot to fall. But once that first one goes in, then it was like a dam breaking. He got in a rhythm and hopefully it's a rhythm that will last through the next two or three games as we go to Anaheim to play games in four days. Hopefully that rhythm will last and he'll shoot the ball well then, too."

On defensive improvements:

"You usually get good at what you work on and we've spent a lot more time defensively at practice. We kind of have the offense. We're working on it, but we're just working on timing now. We know where we're supposed to be, we know what has to be done, so we're trying to retool the defense a little bit. And maybe because we didn't have great offensive output last year, we spent more time on the offense than the defense. So now we're playing a little catch-up defensively and I think it's showing up in the games. We look a little bit better prepared and are playing a little harder."

On an aspect of the defense he was particularly proud of:

"[Terrell Lewis] for them, the point guard, is a very good three-point shooter and I challenged the guys not to give him a three this game, and I don't think he had one. We went over all the ball screens, we didn't get caught on any of the flares, any of the pin downs, we were right there on the catch. We took a guy that had made seven three's in the game before ours and didn't give him one. I thought that, in particular, was something we set as a goal and didn't give him one. Then it was playing dribble-drive. Playing in your gaps, closing out and not getting blown by on the dribble. When they did go by, I thought Kam (Rooks) did a great job stepping over big and protecting the rim. It takes a lot of work and everyone on the same page and I think we're getting there slowly."

On what changed from the first half to second half in terms of turnovers:

"I told the guys that I thought they were trying to stop our break too far up the floor and we were trying to dribble through it. I said we've got to maybe try to advance it on a pass. Most teams try to retreat, but I thought they picked the ball up maybe a bit too early at times and we were trying to split those guys and dribble between too many people instead of just moving ahead easy. I think when we started moving it ahead easy, we found more opportunities for ourselves."

On what kind of player Mitchell was when he was recruited:

"I think Matt's an excellent shooter. When he came available late, we followed him all summer. I watched him play almost every game he played the entire summer. He was a really good shooter this summer. I saw games, maybe not where he had seven, but four or five three's in a game. I knew Matt could shoot the ball. I knew he was a very good shooter and he would get his rhythm. It's such a rhythm thing. Shooting is all confidence and believing you're going to make them. So once he had a couple, he just got on fire

at that point. Obviously, he's going to be feeling good about himself, so we've got to make sure in the next game that we get him an open one right away, not a forced one. He sees another one go in and hopefully we can ride that for a while."

SDSU Senior Forward Malik Pope

On Matt Mitchell scoring in the first half

"I think he did his job at an excellent level. He knocked down the open shots. He had two turnovers. That's not bad for a freshman. The way he played we've got to eat those turnovers up. He played well out there."

On Matt's performance in practice

"I told everyone during media day to watch out for this man. I'm not surprised. We see it every day at practice. He can shoot the ball. He can score. He's really strong. I'm just happy to see him finally show the crowd."

On his response to his blocked shot at the beginning of the game and his response to it

"He hit me with the 'we ready'. I was like okay let's do it. I was ready, I wasn't expecting him to be that long honestly and block that shot. He wanted to compete and they talked a lot of trash so I ignore it and outplay him, that's what I try to do it."

On whether it was the team's best defensive performance

"I wouldn't say it's our best, but we definitely made progress defending for more possessions in a game. We're taking a step forward."

On getting more rebounds

"It's an emphasis during practice. It's tough. I just want to show my toughness. Hopefully it carries on with my teammates, like today did. I just have to stay tough."

SDSU Freshman Forward Matt Mitchell

On where his motivation to score came from:

"I think it came from my teammates getting me open consistently. It gave me confidence that the shot would go in. I kept shooting and it went in so kudos to my teammates."

On receiving love from the fans:

"It felt great. You can feel the fan base; I felt it a little bit. It feels great to feel the fan base and get them on my side."

On Malik being fired up in the first half:

"It gets us fired up to know one of the more quiet guys on our team from time to time gets fired up. It fires us up to see them talking trash on our home floor. That's just kind of disrespectful to us, so we took it as so and we showed them."

On going into the start of the game with his coaches telling him he needs to make his shots:

"Definitely, that's all I needed. I knew once one went in I had my groove back and my teammates started to find me. It made my confidence a lot higher than it was."

On if he considers himself a three-point shooter:

"I label myself as a shooter. It's just one thing I do well. I feel like I do everything well and play at a high level. I wouldn't just label myself as one thing. I see myself as doing multiple."

On adjusting to playing at the college level:

"It's a jump. The defense is at a higher level than high school. I feel that my aggressiveness will wear down on teams. My will gets me to the basket and to the foul line."

Eastern Illinois Head Coach Jay Spoonhour

On the team's anxiety early in the game:

"Well, when you're playing a really big team, it's hard to get a really good shot and they're a really good defensive team, so when you go out there and the things you've been doing for the first part of the season don't really work, then you panic a little bit. We took some rushed shots and when they make you rush, the change ends on you. We did force them into some turnovers and we were trying to guard all right, but they were awfully good tonight. They had guys that haven't made shots all year that you knew would at some point, but just unfortunate it happened on us."

On SDSU freshman forward Matt Mitchell:

"Oh yeah, he's a scorer and a really great player, but he just really hadn't made them his freshmen year and we were hoping maybe he would take one more game off before he started going in."

On SDSU's ability to guard:

"Their guards are really good and really played under control. It was hard for us to stay in front of (Devin) Watson and (Trey) Kell both. When a team is bigger than you, and also they're going around you that makes things kind of tough. I thought when we got down, we took some quick shots and some of them went in, but that can be a problem sometimes — fool's gold. That's how the thing ends up going from 16 up to 25, and then you're out of a game. We probably had some possessions in there that probably should've come down to our offensive, but we just jacked it up real quick and it turned into them making a run on us."

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