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UC Irvine at San Diego State Postgame Quotes

San Diego State 63, UC Irvine 62

Steve Fisher Court at Viejas Arena | San Diego, Calif. | December 9, 2023

Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"Is there any game better than college basketball? My goodness, gracious. Up and down. If you didn't have a vested interest, if you weren't the Aztec coach or Aztec fan, you would be like, "This is exciting." But I wanted to win. It was exciting, and we won. I'm grateful for that. I tell the kids the same thing every year when we're in a tie game like this or we're down five. I said we're going to have 15 more games that are just like this. It's going to be anybody's game to win with five minutes to go, and we have to find a way to make enough plays to win. And we did. It's college basketball, they banked in a three, and it is like, "Oh no, they banked in a three. We're in bad shape." Then we came down, and Darrion Trammell hit a top three like he did at the end of Grand Canyon. He steps up and makes big threes. Our press, we fouled them, and I didn't think it was a foul. We slapped the ball out of their hands, and they went down and missed two free throws the guy who banked the three and missed two free throws. It's college basketball, it's hard, and then we came down and made a timely play in a steal and found a way to win the game. It's exciting and it's fun, but as a coach, then you go back and you learn from it. We played a really great first half defensively and then the second half. This is back-to-back games the opponent shoots 50% against us. We have to find ways to get better at the defensive end. We were not a great rebounding team and less so when Jaedon is not in the lineup. Rebounding was a factor. They missed a late shot and it hit the floor and bounced right in their center's hands, and we fouled him. There are enough mistakes to teach too, but the joy of winning and the joy of competing is so great. That nine days off, I'm enjoying every minute of it thinking of this game."

On Miles Heide starting in place of Jaedon LeDee :

"Miles played good. I mean, last year, I had fifth-year Nathan Mensah, fifth-year Aguek Arop, and fourth-year Jaedon LeDee. I had a bunch of guys, and tonight I have true freshman Miles Heide and true sophomore Elijah Saunders starting on the backline, and that's college basketball. That's the beauty of it. You flip rosters. This is not the NBA, where you bring back your franchise players for 10 years. We got new guys out there and they got tested and they played well under the pressure. Jay Pal, in his ninth Aztec game, came in and played with great confidence and patience. All these new guys are getting an opportunity. At the end of the day, the veterans like Micah make a game-winner, Darrion Trammell makes a three the veterans are making big plays as the other guys slowly catch up."

On Jay Pal's performance in tonight's game:

"Jay Pal knows how to play the game. He's super instinctual and smart. He's been to a junior college. He's been to two other division one schools, and he's a true journeyman. He's learned lessons all along the way. Now he's learning to play in this program, and he's getting better every day. He's one that you think, "Wow, can you imagine five to six games from now?"

What his contributions are going to be as he gets better every time he's in practice and every time he's in a game? We're really excited to have Jay here. We knew he was going to be good, and he is."

On the team's performance so far this season:

"This team buys in, they work hard in practice. We'll get better. We're not good enough yet. I'm saying that and we are 8-2 and we're not good enough yet. We have to get better, they know that. At the same time, as coaches, we can't take the joy out of the game. They have to have fun. It has to be fun. Practice can't be all just dreading to come to practice every day. I told them this week. The key is let's not get by, let's get better. Don't just get by in practice, don't just put the time in. Come out here and get better every day. I thought we got better. This week, we got better in three days of practice leading into this game. It didn't show the second half of the defensive end, but in the first half, we played really good defense, and that was encouraging. Now we have to find ways to cut down on mistakes when they're away from our bench, where we can't help them, and talk them through things when they're in front of our bench at the defensive end. We're growing, we're growing as a team and we're winning. We're 8-2 and that's with the schedule we played. That's a tremendous accomplishment."

Senior Forward Micah Parrish

On his game-winning shot:

"UC Irvine played hard. They're a good team. They got after us on the offensive and defensive end. It was big that Jay Pal got the rebound at the end of the game. He looked and found me, and I made the bucket. Without the offensive rebound from Jay, that wouldn't have happened. Darrion Trammel made a clutch three before, too, so it was a team effort."

On how much Jaedon LeDee's presence was missed:

"It was big having Demarshay Johnson Jr. and Miles Heide, who have not played too many college games. Demarshay hasn't played a lot, so he's just getting time to play. It was tough not having that experience there. For the most part, they did a good job with what they could do."

On the confidence of the team without Jaedon LeDee:

"It's better for the young guys like Demarshay Johnson Jr., Miles Heide, and even Elijah Saunders playing a little bit more by themselves. We got to see more of what Jay Pal can really do. We have a talented team from the starters to the 12-man, so the team's really talented. We just have to make Jaedon Lee effective when he is here."

Senior Forward Jay Pal

On his performance of 15 points off the bench:

"We had Jaedon LeDee out today. I knew where we were lacking, and I knew I could just come in there and bring energy. My teammates were finding me at the right spots, and I was able to make shots. I had a great game, and we came up with the win."

On Coach Dutcher going to him to make a stop:

"It gives me a lot of confidence to know that I trust him, and he trusts me to make a play and do what I have to do for him."

UC Irvine Head Coach Russell Turner

On losing at San Diego State two years in a row:

"We came up short tonight. Give San Diego State credit. I have the utmost respect for their program, their players, their coaches, and the atmosphere that they've created here. Winning a game like this is rare and special when you can accomplish it. We just came up a play or two short again. It hurts, it hurts for our guys, but that's the way the game goes."

Open digging themselves out of a first-half deficit:

"We maintained belief — number one. We stayed together. We stayed competitive. We took good care of the ball, which is the key for us on offense. We got some shots to go in the hole. It was a great start for us in this game. We went through periods in the first half where we didn't look like a functional offensive team. A lot of credit has to go to San Diego State for that. Their defense is renowned. We thought if we defended and rebounded repeatedly and made them face our half-court defense, we could build runs with our defense much like they did to us in the first half. So that's what we did."

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