



## **SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS**

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**San Diego State Men's Basketball Press Conference  
February 2, 2024**

### **Head Coach Brian Dutcher**

#### **Opening Statement:**

"Obviously a good place to be when you're trying to bounce back after a loss is at home. That alone doesn't guarantee success. We're playing a 19-2 ranked team tomorrow afternoon and it'll be a real challenge. What they've done is amazing. Coach Sprinkle, to have not returned a point last year, and with all new guys to get off to a 19-2 head start is unheard of. I guess he's got comfort in the fact that he brought his point guard and his center from his last job. When you're solid up the middle, you have a good chance to be good. So, as much as they're new, two of their new players are not new to their coach, and they are the catalyst of the team, both of them."

#### **On Utah State's season after not returning players from last season:**

"Usually, you would think it would take a full year to get everybody acclimated to each other. Usually, to be a good team, you need some returning pieces that have been in the system. In a way, they have returning pieces with the fact that the point guard and the center played for him on an NCAA tournament team last year. He has some culture. He has two guys that were with him at his last stop. So that culture part, those two guys have meant everything to them. Now the other guys were very good players, but the culture has probably been set by Coach Sprinkle and the two players he brought with him from the other program."

#### **On how the team is recovering from the Colorado State game:**

"They come to work every day. There's no time to feel sorry for yourself. All there is is the work and so we're putting our work in. That alone will not guarantee success. We knew this was a tough stretch of our schedule, playing Colorado State at Colorado State and coming back with Utah State and then going back on the road for two. We have to find a way to fight our way out of a loss and see if we can turn it immediately. It's not easy to do. It's easier with our full Viejas Arena. We get the crowd in here. They're inspiring to us and hard on the other team. It's important, that's why these teams are so good at home in the Mountain West, it's because the stadiums are full of fans and they're hard to play in."

#### **On playing early in the day:**

"I guess if given a choice, I'd rather play early than the 9:00 p.m. start. I think that's really a long time to sit around to play. Our kids will be ready to play tomorrow on the early tip and hopefully the crowd will be here and in the building when the ball is thrown up."

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**On if Utah State is a “must-win game”:**

“The thing you have to know in this conference is, you have to have a thick skin because you're going to lose a game in this conference, and you might lose two in a row. The winner will be whoever can stay right and doesn't kick themselves and finds a way to get back on a win streak. Boise has done great. They've lost two home games, yet they find themselves 4-0 on the road. What they've done is amazing, but I'm sure they're kicking themselves over the two home losses. Utah State escaped Vegas. In that game, they were down 4 with the last possession in the game, they got a three and got fouled and had a five-point play. You have to find ways to win games. It's not always pretty, but you have to find a way to win those kinds of games in order to compete in this conference.”

**On the officiating when it comes to Jaedon LeDee:**

“In the road games we've won, he's gotten to the foul line. In the ones we've lost, New Mexico and Colorado State, he hasn't got to the line. He had a free throw in each of those games. He's the same player but, I can't control officiating. I know sometimes you might get a better whistle at home just because of the home crowd and the things that go into these environments. I'm not saying the refs are affected by it, but everybody is affected by a good home environment: the opposition, your team, the officials. That's why home court is so important. And having a full house is so important.”

**On what makes Utah State so effective offensively:**

“They just seem to have the right pieces doing the right things all the time. They have guys that are very good drivers, they've got an elite shooter in [Ian] Martinez, who is shooting over 40 percent from three this year. That's unheard of. And then they have a great center in [Great] Osobor and then they have role guys that know their roles and they're well coached, they're disciplined, and they're experienced. That's why they're 19-2, it's not a surprise to anybody. Now the key to them, like anybody, is can they continue to get better the second time around, once everyone's played them once. Our coaches feel like it's an NCAA Tournament game. Most of the teams we play in the conference, the better players have been in those programs for a year or two. We are familiar with them. No one's familiar with Utah State. The first time you play them, you can watch them on tape, but until you get a feel for them, personally being out there across from them, it's like an NCAA tournament game where we haven't seen this team all year. These are all new pieces, the first time we'll see them. We'll try to do the best we can obviously with the prep, but I think the second time around after everyone's playing them once, maybe people will have a better feel for who they are and what they do well.”

**On the improvement of the San Diego State bench:**

“Our bench is deep, and we win with defensive rebounding. The way we ask them to guard, we have to go to the bench more to keep fresh legs on the floor. Our bench has won us games. It played well at Colorado State, it got us back in the game and it gave us great minutes and so now we have to continue to try to find the combinations that work best together on the floor.”

## **Junior Guard Reese Waters**

**On the team putting the Colorado State game behind them:**

“You definitely have to put the losses behind you, to use it as motivation. At the same time, we understand that that was a game that we could've won. It came down to the little details that we've been practicing in practice and just fixing little things that we have to use coming into Utah State. They're a good team, so we're preparing for them, and I think we're ready and we're excited.”

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**On if Utah State is a “must-win game”:**

"I think every game is a must win. I don't think you ever go into a game like "we can lose this one" but it's definitely a game that we're ready for and I think everybody is really excited to go out there."

**On what makes San Diego State different than other teams he has been a part of:**

"It's definitely an energy in the locker room. Everybody wants to win so everybody gets frustrated after a loss. You're going to lose a game in any type of game in this sport so we take our losses and learn from them."

**On playing at home compared to on the road:**

"It's hard to win on the road in general. We definitely take pride in winning at home. It's our home court. It's our home, so, definitely don't want to lose but in general we have to just come in more prepared, more focused, which I think we've been doing a better job at since the beginning of the season."

**On playing in a sold-out Viejas Arena:**

"I love it. I know everybody else loves it. I can only speak for myself. I love playing in environments like that where the lights are bright, and the stars come out. It's definitely something I look forward to."

**On Utah State's season after not returning players from last season:**

"Very impressive. I think that for a lot of college teams, especially through the transfer portal, it's hard to get people that gel together and the fact that they got a whole new team that gels with each other is impressive. At the end of the day, we have to win the game."

**-SDSU-**