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Grand Canyon at San Diego State Postgame Quotes Steve Fisher Court at Viejas Arena | San Diego, Calif. November 13, 2019

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"(Tonight was a) Nice effort. Offensively when you have 35 baskets and 25 of them assisted, you're playing the game the right way. We're creating avenues and driving lanes and then we're moving the ball. Some of the shots we missed were wide open. They made a strategic decision to leave the corner open on ball screens and let our four men shoot. We didn't shoot that great, but then we have the versatility to say with Jordan Schakel, you're the four you go down to that corner, and then it changes things. We can make adjustments to try to put people in better positions to score, but overall offensively we shared the ball as well as we have all year. Defensively, I told them before the game that we're the fifth-leading rebounding team in the country. I said, 'Are those numbers real or fake?' as we're only two games into the season, so we'll see what our real identity is as we get four, five, six, seven, eight games into the season and what kind of rebounding team we are. We ended up out-rebounding them for the game which pleased me. Obviously, it hasn't been by the numbers that we have been out-rebounding people but I wanted it in their mind that rebounding is important to what we do. I challenged them in that way to say, 'Is that number real, are we that good of a rebounding team?' and we rebounded pretty good today. They're tough to guard, and Dan's (Dan Majerle) a good coach. He runs a lot of set plays and he puts you in a lot of tough positions. The best thing we're doing defensively that is improved from the last couple of years is we're communicating at a higher level. I think it was Rasheed Wallace or Kevin Garnett that said, 'The sixth defender is communication'. If you talk at a high level it's like having a sixth defender. If we make mistakes, we're able to cover for each other because we're talking really well at the defensive end and communicating at a high level."

On win against a depleted team:

"It's hard on Dan (Dan Majerle). His numbers are down right now. He'll have reinforcements coming at the break. He has a couple guys that are getting eligible at the break. They have to survive like all teams do. It's a long season. He's like all of us, if you lose a couple non-conference games it's going to be harder to get an at-large bid. But then you sit there and go, 'We have a pretty good team. With all our pieces, we can win the WAC conference and go to the NCAA tournament'. I wouldn't be surprised if at the end of the year if you looked up and Grand Canyon is competing to put themselves in the NCAA tournament. He's a good coach and they've got good talent. When they get all their pieces set, they're going to be really hard to play against. With that being said, we pressed all game because we knew they only had six players. It's a cumulative effect. We may not be getting turnovers, but we're making them play 94 feet and that point guard has to bring it up against pressure all game. They don't turn it over a lot but that wears on you after a while and that's what we wanted to do."

On Wetzell's well-rounded performance:

"I'm sure he's frustrated, he's missing a lot of chippies around the basket that he's going to make (other times) because he makes them in practice. If it was a case where I watch practice everyday and he's missing all those shots, well then he just can't finish, but he makes them all in practice. He just has to transition from what he's doing in practice and put it in the game. But he plays a smart game, he's a fifth-year senior, he played with intelligence (tonight). He's physically strong and athletic and we're very fortunate to have him on the team and in the program."

On players' focus on this game:

"It was very satisfying. Since we've been here, Coach Fisher and I, we've lost to Grand Canyon in both important, critical games. At the time, it doesn't seem that way, but when the season finishes up and you have that loss on your record, we knew it hurt us. So, we wanted to come out and play at a high level because we knew they were a very good opponent. I thought the kids respected them, they knew they were good and even at halftime I told them that I watched the Illinois tape, Illinois was 16 ahead and I looked up at the four-minute mark and it was a four-point game. So, we knew they had a run in them and they had a run in the second half but we withstood it, maintained it for a while and then built the lead back."

On lob play after the timeout:

"We've been running that play. We got a dunk for Nate (Nathan Mensah) in the first half. We got one for Yanni in the second half. We just change up who the passer is going to be. This particular time we played KJ (Feagin) out there. We've been running Jordan (Schackel) and Matt (Mitchell) up there and giving them a little bit of a different look and KJ made a great pass to Yanni at the rim. A dunk always is a little extra motivating for the crowds and for the team. So, when we got a dunk, we really put an end to the run at that point."

On having fifth-year seniors in tough situations:

"They executed. All they have to do is show us what they do in practice. Don't do anything other than what you've shown us in practice because that's good enough. They're playing now like what they've shown us in practice. The ball's moving easier. Like Coach (Chris) Acker said at halftime, he felt like we made a step forward because the players are calling more stuff. They're coming down and calling stuff out of the break and stuff out of our secondary break offense. They're calling the options so that means they're growing and they're taking ownership. That takes a lot of responsibility off a head coach if the team's running it (the game). It's better sometimes so they don't have to look to me all the time. They're calling stuff and I'm perfectly happy with that."

On Matt Mitchell's technical:

"It's an emphasis. It's talking, it's celebrating, it's taunting an opponent. I told Matt, 'Don't do it again.' There's emotion in the game. I think Jordan (Schackel) had emotion, but he yelled it out and didn't yell it at a player. Emotions are part of the game, I want it played emotionally, but smart."

On new three-point line:

"The guards are shooting it from that distance with no problem and the bigs are getting a lot of corner threes. We need to continue to shoot at a high level and then we'll be hard to guard."

On Schackel and Flynn's quiet night:

"I told them after the game, everybody is going to have a different night on this team. We've got a lot of talent. I told them if it wasn't your night tonight just go to work and it will be the next night. Jordan only played six-and-a-half minutes the first half because he got two fouls and I didn't want to put him in there and risk him getting a third foul in what I thought could be a close game. But, we were able to maintain the lead and when he did play, all we were trying to do at that point was to build and maintain the lead so he didn't get a lot of opportunities to shoot. Even if he doesn't make a shot, he's adding value by stretching the defense and that's what I thought would happen with his hot shooting right now."

San Diego State sophomore forward Nathan Mensah

On back-to-back dunks contributing to the energy of the game:

"I feel like I got the ball in the right place at the right time to get those buckets. It was the right time for the energy to boost **our team**."

On adjusting to the new lineup:

"It feels great. I feel like we are able to play bigger in the paint, and we are able to dominate on the rebounding side, so I feel like it helps offensively and defensively, too."

On Yanni's role on the team:

"Honestly, he does all of the things that no one sees. He encourages us on and off the court and he helps us bring the best of ourselves. Even though he didn't have a good game at BYU, he encourages the other players to bring out the best in them. Today, he showed the maturity that is within

him. When I missed my guy on the defensive side, he covered for me and told me, 'Keep my head in the game.' Yanni plays a huge role for us on this team."

San Diego State senior guard KJ Feagin

On tonight's performance:

"I'm proud of the way we played. We followed our game plan, and the coaches were preaching to us at half time to keep sharing the ball. It felt like it was everybody's night. I'm glad that we were mature enough to not be selfish and continued to share the ball. It's easy to do that. With the group we have, we love each other, and we want to see each other win, so it's important for us to keep sharing the ball."

On never beating Grand Canyon before:

"Coach Dutch was really on edge coming into this game. I wanted to come out and show him that I'm right on edge with him. I'm right behind him and whatever he wants the team to do, I'll direct them in that path. I knew he wanted this win. Being a part of the team that beat BYU, and now turned around and got Grand Canyon. I'm happy that we accomplished both missions."

On what this win means:

"We can only play who's on the floor against us. Each team has injuries and problems that they're dealing with, so whatever five they put on the floor, that's who we're playing against. We just want to win every game and I'm a winner, we're all winners, we're all competitors and none of us like losing. We definitely want to protect home court. They brought out their fan section, but this is our gym and this is our home and we need to let people know that when they play here, it's not going to be an easy game."

On the Grand Canyon student section:

"We saw them filing in early and I didn't like how many they had. Our student section showed up and we gave them something to cheer about, and their student section didn't have much to cheer about. That's the momentum that we want to continue moving forward."

On team mindset at the beginning of the game:

"Starting the game, each team wants to get the first punch in. We know in the first five minutes; each team is trying to feel the other out and we were trading baskets. After that first timeout, we came together and said, 'We need to turn it up a little bit.' From then on, we were in control of the game."

On how the team progresses from game one to game three:

"We're still scratching the surface in terms of end-product and potential. We're showing how good we can be if we stay on track, stay grounded and stay humble. This team has big aspirations and, with the talent we have, we should have big aspirations. It's kind of like 'all-or-nothing' with this team. You don't put together a team like this just to be mediocre. Coming into this season, we knew that expectations were high, not only from ourselves, but from the outside world. We just have to stay together and take it day by day and try to reach our goals."

On usual big players having a quieter night.

"It just goes to show that the coaches put together a great team and they know what they wanted and now it's coming into fruition. (Adam) Seiko had big minutes. Jordan (Schakel) and Malachi (Flynn) got going in the second half. At halftime I told Mal, 'It's time to turn it up.' Jordan had a whole half where he had to sit. I wanted to get those two going, and they got going and it bode well for the rest of the team."

On the lob play to Yanni Wetzell:

"We ran that play a lot at BYU and we were missing it a lot. I think I missed Nate maybe two or three times during that play. Coach was telling me to look for the lob and I threw it and Yanni was there to catch it. I'm glad that we were able to complete that. It was a play that we went over numerous times in practice, and we implemented it into the game."

On Yanni's role on the team:

"You don't find 6'10" bigs anywhere that can do everything like he does. He told me that he didn't play like he wanted to play at BYU and I told him, 'It's two games into the season. Just clear your head.'" We have 30-34 more games to play and I just wanted him to clear his head and do him to the best of his ability. If nobody believes you, I do. And I know the people in this room and the team does. I'm glad he played well and this is a good confidence builder for him and now we just have to keep building on it."

Grand Canyon Head Coach Dan Majerle

On positives to take away from tonight:

"We have to do a better job of being connected, five guys on the floor knowing what they're supposed to do. Was there any positives? No not really, I think the only positive is we'll get up tomorrow and go home and we'll get back in the gym on Friday. All the coaches will be there and we'll coach the heck out of them and see what happens."

On SDSU's early success:

"They started pounding it inside from the beginning, the first half I think they had us 18-2 in the paint so they did a good job with their size and we didn't cover it very well, we weren't tough enough. We won the first four minutes and then it just went downhill, we fought a little in the second half but we just weren't tough enough. They did a great job they started making threes we started taking the paint away a little bit then they started making threes and got back in the paint. We didn't compete hard enough tonight."

Grand Canyon Associate Head Coach Marvin Menzies

On being back in San Diego:

"(San Diego) used to be home so obviously it's good to come back. But, when you come back for a business trip, it's a little different mindset. It's always good to see Dutch, Mark and the staff."

On the program:

"They've (SDSU) been heading in the right direction for a long time, and now they just have to continue to do what they do and make perennial runs and get to the NCAA tournament. I'm sure they'll get back to that, I think they were ranked fourth in the country at one point and that's going to be in the future for these guys. This is a really good team, he's got a really good core guys and it's good to see their recruiting paying off for them."

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