



SAN DIEGO STATE COMMUNICATIONS

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San Diego State Football Press Conference March 17, 2026

Head Coach Sean Lewis

Opening Statement:

"Good morning, everyone doing good, happy St. Patty's Day to all. It's a really cool time on The Mesa, and exciting, awesome that women's playing basketball in the WBIT over at USD [University of San Diego]. I encourage everyone in the community to go see that; I'm going to be over there on Thursday. Softball, baseball, and tennis all got big conference wins this weekend, which is great to see. It's amazing, the work that Dutch [Brian Dutcher] continues to do with the consistency, level of success, men's basketball. It's awesome to have the great leaders that we do and the tremendous athletes that we have and get to rub shoulders with. We are less than a week out before we can get back out on the field and do some practice with Spring Ball starting."

On Chris Johnson's performance at the NFL Combine and SDSU's Pro Day:

"He killed it. It was great for him to have that stage, that opportunity. It was awesome to see him compete in the way that we've seen him compete for the past two seasons. We were not surprised, he's a young man that's from day one has had a professionalism about how he approaches his business, the way that he shows up each day. He was trained, he was ready for that moment and maximized the opportunity. So, it was really great to see and then just doubled down on it all again during Pro Day and showcase the skills yet again, along with the other seniors on that day. There's been a great, steady buzz from the time that he decided to stay on The Mesa a year ago, all the way through with his performance and what he's done, and excited to see what that looks like as we go forward in the draft."

On development of Jayden Denegal and the quarterback room:

"Jayden is going to get a lot of reps. Stone's [Stone Saunders] going to get a lot of reps trade all day. Dre [Draiden Trudeau] is going to get some reps as well. Again, like the beauty in which our style of play is, there's a ton of reps to go around. There's going to be a great body of work that everyone's going to be able to learn and grow from, from their own reps that they're getting, and then again, from the other lessons that will be taught from the other reps that guys are going to get. So, I'm looking forward to them again, enhancing their best, to stretching their edges, figuring out what windows can we fit throws into? How do we develop relationships and timing with the new speed that is around them, so that we can cultivate the details of our craft when it comes to the throw game, and do that at a much higher level, because that wasn't to the standard of our performance."

On the state of the Aztec's running back depth:

"I mean, you know, prioritizing the retention of Lucky was huge. You know, you just don't have numerous Doak Walker semifinalists just floating around. So, to have one in your building, to keep them, and for him to be a hometown hero, to keep him here was huge. Obviously, Christian provided value, and looking for him to have more consistency, and all things that he's doing, and then bringing in Chop [Javion Kinnard] from Colorado State, he was a guy as we prepped for Colorado State, I was telling our staff, don't let him touch the ball in any way that we can control, that he's not going to touch the ball. So, to have a player of his caliber and his explosive nature in our building. Now it's up to us to, you know, deploy them properly and utilize all their skill sets and for them to know and understand that as talented as all three of them are, there's tight ends and wide receivers and quarterbacks that are equally talented, and there's only one football to go around. So, earn your role, own your role, and let's do best by the Aztecs."

On Pac-12's Flex schedule innovation:

"I think it's great to for our conference and for our team, to where things will be sorted out on the field. We didn't win last year; we didn't do a good job of keeping things in an area that we could control. So, we have got to handle our business, and we have got to, you know, maximize every single opportunity that we have. I think it's great again, outside the box thinking, whatever is that you want to call it by the league office and the presidents and the commissioner and the athletic directors to do something unique that shines a great spotlight on our conference and the way that they are forward thinking, and how we can, create an opportunity to put a spotlight on our league last week of the season, that will then ultimately set up for clear success of who's going to be playing the championship game."

On the mindset of building and molding the 2026 roster:

"Every single year that I've done this going back to playing at the collegiate level and coaching all the way through, every year your individual role changed on what that team needed, or how you grew and how you improved. So, a lot is made about it now, because there's more guys coming and going than ever before, but each team is its own team. So, we may be going into year three of our program, and that gives us some stability. I think that's what everyone is craving for and looking for, is just stability in the world of college football. Building the 2026 team is an awesome opportunity that we get just in 2026 and every single year that we're fortunate to do this, as we go forward, it'll be the same thing will hold true. But having a Tano Letuli, having a Jayden Denegal, having a Joe Borjon, having a Dalesean Staley that understands how we do things and why we do them, they act as force multipliers to help us get the new guys onboard. But, who Denegal needs to be for this 2026 team is completely different than who the team needed him to be in 2025. Big Joe [Joe Borjon] came back off of injury a year ago and probably being a little bit more individualized, reestablishing his confidence and his role in solidifying himself back up front. Well, hey, that's completely different for him now. As Kalan Ellis is going to be a little bit limited because of his shoulder surgery at the end of the season, Joe will be the only returning starter that will take the field next week for us. So now who he is and who he needs to be for the program, that's different. So, it's always a year-to-year process of how you can build a team, how guys solidify and earn their roles by the work that they do with one another, and how they love and sacrifice for the program, ultimately, so that we can win a whole bunch of games come the fall."

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