



SAN DIEGO STATE COMMUNICATIONS

5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

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San Diego State Football Press Conference September 7, 2026

Head Coach Sean Lewis

Opening Statement:

"Welcome everyone. Appreciate you guys' laboring with us on this Labor Day. How awesome is this to be able to do some great work, clean up a sloppy win. The boys did that work this morning. It is time to put the Portland State game to bed. Glad that we were able to get the right outcome. Not pleased with our process and how we went about it. Lots of things, you know, operationally that we need to be better at. We highlighted that with the boys this morning. I love their demeanor, the way that they responded to it all, we got a great opponent, obviously here in UCLA, who had a great showing this past weekend and we get to play at a great venue in the Rose Bowl. What a unique and cool opportunity for a Pac-12 opponent to meet a Big 10 opponent and to create another great moment of history in the next chapter in college football up there in Pasadena, so looking forward to that. Again, want to acknowledge our student section and how awesome it was for their support and the members of our students that came out. We need to continue to have that. So, you know tell a friend, be a friend if you were there and spread the good word. What an exciting brand of football it looked like people came to see, and hopefully we can continue to grow that out into something special. With our team in particular, there were a lot of people in new roles that got a significant number of snaps in a role that they're not used to being in. It was good to see our boys settle in a little bit more and to play with a little bit more confidence. I think we should see some more improvement there as we round the corner into week two. I think also one of the things that's really going to benefit us is that we played 82 players against Portland State. When all is said and done, we dressed out 94. We played 82. So, 82 guys got the opportunity to feel what a game feels like, whether that was the first snap because they started or it was the last snap at the end. Guys now know firsthand when we say treat practice like a game, mentally they can put themselves there. So, the preparation this week should be better because they know what game intensity needs to be, and for 82 guys that is real now. That's not just some mythical thing that coach talks about. They know what it is that's important for how we prepare this week."

On the veteran players leading the team into week two:

"We had a great conversation with the leadership crew this morning, and I'm just giving feedback about some things that they deserve, and you know I've said this numerous times in different ways. Like the players know and I am kind of the last to know at times. But players know, and players have a pulse of like who's locked in, who's intentional, who's doing it the right way, who maybe needs to be you know pulled in, have an arm put around them, or maybe a size 14 shoe shoved up their butt to get them going. The dialog that we had as a leadership crew was really, really good. The ownership of those guys growing as leaders and being more vocal and really carrying the burden of leadership. It's one of those things that everyone wants to be a leader. Everyone wants to have a "C" on their chest. Everyone wants to be a single-digit guy, and it's there's a lot that comes with that besides the attention. So, if you're going to be one of those guys, you got to be the first to lift the heaviest burden,

and you got to be the last to put it down. That's what a leader does, and that's what those guys do each and every single day. I think they model the standard of what it is, and I'm really proud of how they stepped up. All that being said, I think there's so much more room for them to grow, for them to step outside their comfort zones, and in the right way instill confidence and push, pull, encourage their teammates to come along in the journey that they're on, and the journey that our team is on."

On facing UCLA quarterback Nico Iamaleava:

"He can touch the whole field with his arm. He can stress you with his legs. He's a really intelligent kid. He's got over 1,300 career snaps, so he's seen a lot of pictures. He's unbelievably talented. He stresses out in a lot of different ways. Probably won't be a whole lot sleep this week."

On the growth of the program after week one:

"Our standards are really process driven, and how we show up, the energy that we bring in, the things that we can control, that we do a better job with that. There were too many lows, there were too many miscommunications, there were too many moments where, for our brand and the pride that we have and who we're becoming, we're at the point of attack. We didn't violently put our hands on things the right way, the way the guys are trained to do. We give that feedback, and we have got to do a better job of having more positive moments show up. The variance between highs and lows, we have got to really narrow that gap. I want the highs to continue to grow, but the lows need to come way up. Again, that's at an individual level. It's within units. It's within the organization as a whole. We just want to have that constant growth mindset of how we can work these processes better. If we take care of those processes and hold the line on our standards, then scoreboard will take care of itself."

Redshirt Freshman Wide Receiver Jaylon Hawkins

On his growth and improvement as a player:

"Honestly, just listening to the older guys, they've been doing it for a long time. It's my second year, so I'm just listening to them and coach Mid [wide receiver coach Matthew Middleton]. He is a great coach; he'll tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. So just keeping my head down and getting better because of those guys."

On his playing experience as a true freshman last year:

"It was a great experience, and it was my first time ever getting on the field at a college level. I just wanted to go out there and perform and show what I can do."

On his 100-yard kick return touchdown against Portland State:

"Honestly, I was thinking just go score before the play in the huddle. I talked to my kick return team, asking them to block, which they did. We practiced all week; I trust them, they have trust in me. We just went out there and executed. Honestly, that's all we did, man. Just prepare for it. All the weeks, all the time, all the reps we have had. Just went out there and executed. . . Everybody knows that we have really good players on our team and that we're capable of making plays like that; it's expected of all of us. My teammates just kept telling me, "Good job" and to keep doing it every week."

Senior Defensive Lineman Gavriel Lightfoot

On preparing to face a Power Four opponent:

"I've played against plenty of Power Four conferences. They're just another opponent to me. The game picks up a little bit, some guys are better, bigger, and stronger; you just have to adapt."

On his last game in the Rose Bowl during the 2024 season:

"Yeah, it was back and forth up until the end. It was at the end of the game that UCLA pretty much pulled away with it, and we didn't finish and close out the game well enough. I'm just excited to play against those guys again."

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