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San Diego State Football Press Conference
September 21, 2026

Head Coach Sean Lewis

Opening Statement:
"Obviously, really good effort by James Madison and we tip the cap to them and Coach Napier [James Madison's head coach Billy Napier}]. His guys came across the country. They played really, really hard. I thought there were some areas where we played really hard as well. Some areas where our details need to get tighter. The execution of our base fundamentals needs to continue to get better as we go. We need to coach it better so the boys feel confident to cut it loose and to let it rip and to play to the best of their ability. There are some really good moments of us doing that. We talk about being consistently good and occasionally great in all three phases. Right now, we're occasionally great and not consistently good, so we need to become consistent with all that we do and continue to refine our preparation. I thought our prep last week and our process was really, really good, and that gave us confidence to step into the arena. We need to do that again and continue to prepare against a really good Toledo team. I want to thank the fans. You know they showed up yet again. Student section was really good, and you know I will coach better and I will lead better so that we can get them engaged earlier in the game so that they can be a real positive force and compete with us. But I truly appreciate and feel the support from our community, which is great. You know as we look ahead, got Toledo this week. You know really well coached team, explosive offensively. You know they're down 42-28 with under four minutes to go in that game [Toledo's overtime win against Temple last week], and do a tremendous job offensively, going down, getting points. They execute the onside kick and two plays later; two explosive plays they're back in the end zone. They force overtime. They get the ball in the top half of the overtime, punch that thing in quickly, and then the defense stops a two-point play there at the end, so you know they have found a way to win. They went toe-to-toe week one against Michigan State. They're a physical unit in all three phases. They're an explosive unit in all three phases. They're really well coached and building upon an already strong culture that was there from Coach Candle [previous Toledo head coach] and the previous staff, and the new staff is doing a great job as well. So, you know, it is a great opportunity for us. It's going to come quickly. We're going to get up early and get the ball down and go get to work. So, it'll be a lot of fun. So, it'd be great to get up and go attack that opportunity. But first and foremost, we got to have a great week of preparation and earn the right to win by how we go about the work this week."

On Javion Kinnard's emergence and performance against James Madison:
I thought he did a really nice job, creating some dirty yards. I was really impressed. He continues to not let one man get him down to the ground, you know he's got explosive playmaking abilities. He's a guy who shows up each and every single day, and his energy is infectious. He comes in, he makes this building better. He loves football, and obviously he knows the room that he stepped into and the program that he joined, and you know who's in that room with him including Lucky [SDSU running back Lucky Sutton], but he prepares each and every single day since he's been here since day one. Through Winter

conditioning to spring ball he has been preparing so when the opportunity comes, and the opportunity showed up, he was trained, and he was ready, and he's maximized the majority of those snaps. There are still some opportunities that he's got to get better at, and that he'll refine, and he'll get better with. But yeah, it was great to see him be ready, be trained, and you know to take advantage of that opportunity…he has got a unique background, and he's as tough as nails, and he's resilient as they come, and he has the courage to grow and evolve, we were talking this morning. Every conversation that we have had, him and I, whether it's about ball or about life or his academic work, he's a very mature individual. He's a very serious individual, and he takes great pride in how he shows up and how he carries himself. With him you talk about it, you correct it, and you talk about it one time, and it's corrected, and it's done. He has maturity and the humility to realize that he's got confidence about him. He's a really good player, but he's got a humility about him that he knows that he can get better. Then there's ownership to what he does. He's going to make the situation right, no matter how challenging it is. He's going to find a way to make it right, and he's done that ever since he's been here. He's been doing that long before he got here in his journey in life, which is really impressive and you know a testament to who he is and the young man that he's become, and I'm really grateful that he's in our program and he chose to be here with us."

On keeping the team focused after two losses:
"Don't worry about results. Results are the byproduct of your process and how you go about your business. You know, I've shared this before when we had family dinner last night, and my daughter is in first grade now. We're working on counting all sorts of different things. I've got game film up on the TV and I said, "Hey, baby, count how many guys are in the box?", and she can count to seven. She counted seven and so she can have the results of counting to seven, and know that hey, there's seven guys in the box. She has no idea how seven guys got into the box or why those seven guys are in the box, but she knows that there's seven guys in the box. So, it's really easy to look at the box score. It's really easy to look at the scoreboard and to be moaning and get upset that those guys got more than we got, and not understand the who, what, why, and the process of why the scoreboard is that way or why the results that we love to talk about are that way, but any results you're ever going to have in life that we have in between the white lines, or that you know guys have in their classrooms, and you know the quality of our relationships that we have is because of the respect and the level of care that you have for the day-to-day interactions, and the seriousness that you show up with about the process and how it's required to achieve the results that you want? So, I'll let you guys talk about the results, and I'm going to obsess about the process and how we can do that better, you know, today and as we move through the week, and then when we step into the arena on game day on Saturday."

On facing Toledo in the Glass Bowl:
"They are explosive as hell. They got guys that are home run threats all over the yard. You know, the last three minutes and 30 seconds of that game against Temple, they have home run hitters that can touch the paint and touch the end zone at any given moment. Their quarterback is really dialed. He's got a good understanding of their scheme, and he's a tough individual that's hard to bring down in the pocket. On the fourth down late, he does an unbelievable job of moving, manipulating in the pocket, climbing, keeping his eyes downrange, and throws a seed right over the middle for a big conversion. Right, and so you know that within their offense, the physicality of their front is really impressive. So yeah, they're dangerous in a lot of ways."

Senior Linebacker Tano Letuli

On his role as a team leader:
"In general, from the coaching staff down to the leaders of the team, down to everybody else, there's just been a certain mode of operation. There is a certain way we do things based on our culture and standards. I think, especially now, when it's not easy, that's when it's time to reinforce those rules and to double down on those again. We're not jumping ship, we're not panicking, and it's up to us to see who the real ones are essentially… It's about actually going out there on Saturday and doing it, and not just for yourself, but for your brother next to you. I think once we get that right, we're going to be all right."

On the team coming together during adversity:
"Today was our first day back in the building as a team, which was for a mandatory event. The biggest thing for us was just coming together and having the right attitude. So, don't show up if you're not ready to get this work in, and show up excited to do the work. I keep saying it's not going the way we're wanting to do it, but it's about who's going to show up with the right attitude and who's going to show up with the right mindset… Although today was the first mandatory day back, I'd say 90% of us were back here lifting and running yesterday. Also, just when having conversations, you can kind of see it in everybody's eyes, whether they're going to show up or mope around. That's the attitude and mindset that we're trying to correct and kind of address. Don't show up if you're not ready to work. When your back is against the wall and when we're not winning games, let's see who's really going to show up for us."

On needing to start faster as a team on game day:
"I think it's definitely been a problem for us. Like the last two games, or as a group, we're not starting fast enough. We can't be giving teams certain leads for us to be chasing while in a hole the rest of the game; that's not how we want to be playing football. I think just watching that first drive, just defense particularly. There was a missed assignment on almost every single play, and that's something that we're controlling. That's something that we're doing, and right now that's us. That's what we're putting on film. We have to own that, and we have to take ownership, and it's up to us to fix it."

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