

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 15, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**San Diego State Aztecs**

**Coach Brian Dutcher**

**Micah Parrish**

**Reese Waters**

Postgame Press Conference

San Diego State 86, Utah State 70

THE MODERATOR: For San Diego State we have student-athletes Micah Parrish, Reese Waters.

Coach Brian Dutcher, we'll start with you. Get some thoughts on today's game?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Just this team has always had great resolve. It's got a great grit about it. And we got down 17 in the first half. We don't panic. We just fight our way, fight, fight, fight, and we caught a break.

When Osobor got his second foul, he went to the bench, they were having a good rhythm, and with him out of the game, they had to change how they were playing a little bit. We decide to do play Micah and Jaedon with two fouls each, running the risk of maybe them getting a third foul by half.

I felt the way the game was going we needed to make a stand in the first half. And we were fortunate Darrion hit another halftime buzzer beater to close the gap, and we were in the game at halftime. Then we came out the second half, played our continually good defense, and these two guys made shots.

The first game I think they were 1 for 15, something like that, and today when they make shots, you can see what our offense looks like. They're both capable.

I believe the ball is going in every time they shoot it. Now that they have a little rhythm, hopefully that continues into tomorrow night and into the NCAA Tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.



**Q. When the game is called like this especially in the first half, what do you kind of have to change about the way you play on both ends to limit your fouls, but to also draw more in the offensive end?**

REESE WATERS: I think we just play smarter. We're an aggressive team. We play aggressive on offense, defense. But just making smarter decisions and being on time. Especially in defense. If it's help defense, you're just on the ball, not reaching as much and just playing disciplined.

**Q. Your coach sat up here after yesterday's game at the podium and said he's convinced that both of you will make shots tomorrow. You guys are up here for a reason, because you made shots. I don't know if you heard that yesterday, but what does it mean to have the confidence from your coach like that?**

MICAH PARRISH: I know us two, we know our coaches believe in us. They put time in us and watch film with us. Each and every one of the coaches, they keep telling us (indiscernible).

We both appreciate it. I know I appreciate it to have a coaching staff like this, to have the coaching staff believe in us.

**Q. Micah, a phenomenal first half that was really a huge part of you guys staying in this game long enough to battle all the way back and have one of your best offensive performances of the year. Did Coach say anything to you specifically to get you to be aggressive like that in the first half, or was that more just the flow of the game and it just kind of took you that way?**

MICAH PARRISH: My performances the last couple of months, since the beginning of the year hasn't been up to my standard. I know I had to break out soon. I know put the work in. I work every day on my shot, so I knew one day it was going to come. I guess today it came. Hopefully it keeps going throughout the whole tournament run.



**Q. Coach, talk about you were down 17 to go up 13, basically turn the game around 30 points at about 17, 18 minutes. Jaedon was super aggressive in that first six, seven minutes of the second half. I think he had 13 points in the first six, seven minutes. Was that something you talked to him about being aggressive, or is that just his natural tendency to understand, hey, we're down and we need some help here?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I don't think we needed to tell Jaedon to be aggressive. We have to dial him back sometimes.

I just felt with both bigs having two fouls, neither one wanted to pick up his third right away, so we tried to go to Jaedon right away and put pressure on Osobor.

Jaedon, I thought he had his best passing night as an Aztec tonight. When he does that, we're going to be really good. When he starts kicking it out and these guys are making shots, now we have the whole package. We have him dangerous inside scoring and now they're afraid to double because these guys are shooting, and he is kicking it out.

I say you get better or get worse, and we're getting better. It's a good time to get better.

**Q. Reese, most points scored since December 19th -- 86. Just playing in back-to-back games, does it help with the flow of the offense?**

REESE WATERS: In terms of everybody? Yeah. I definitely think it helps. My fault. Can you repeat the question. I lost --

**Q. 86 points tonight as a team. The most that you've scored since December 19th. Does playing back-to-back days help with the flow of the offense for everybody?**

REESE WATERS: I think especially for us how we practice and how we go through our film and how every individual player talks to each other. We talk on the court and off the court, especially with the coaches. It definitely helps.

I think as a team not having a week to sit down and think about maybe whatever you did in the game that you didn't like, it definitely helps that you have a turnaround. So you have to focus on the next game. You don't have time to sit there and think about or get in your own mind or thought about it.

**Q. For both players, you hadn't had a great last few weeks. You're 4-4, I think, coming into the tournament.**

**You lose two straight, which you guys never do. Then you have that big moment yesterday. Darrion makes a shot. Jaedon makes a shot late to get over the hump you haven't been able to get to all year. Does it free you up like the Charleston game did last year and just freed you?**

REESE WATERS: I wasn't there.

MICAH PARRISH: Yeah, definitely. I mean, at the beginning of the year, every time we have close games we have to get over the hump. This past recent couple of weeks, we haven't been able to get over the hump. So it's nice to finally get over the hump again and know what it feels like to finish games. That's going to help us in the future.

REESE WATERS: Same.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Thank you, men. Questions for Coach.

**Q. Obviously tough to lose Jaedon in the first few minutes of the game. What did you like about the way that you guys were able to respond -- how he was able to respond as well to go on that run and make it close and then take a lead in the second half?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, we played without Jaedon for a while and held in there. Heide did a good job. He had a putback, and he was playing pretty good, but he made a couple of freshman mistakes. The game was hovering, and the coaches asked me do I want to put Micah back in? I said, yes. They figured, well, I was getting soft. They said how about Jaedon? I said put him in two.

We put them both in with two fouls and it kind of turned the momentum of the game. Because at that time, Osobor was out, so we could go outside to Jaedon, and Osobor wasn't guarding him. I don't know if he scored a lot, but he drew fouls and changed the momentum of the game.

We had a good stretch to finish the half, which we needed to get back into the game. Are then the second half we came out, played good Aztec basketball and guarded. We out-rebounded them. Defensive rebounds are going to win championships. That's what we preach and believe in. I thought we guarded and rebounded at a high level.

**Q. Jaedon and Great, one of the better matchups in this conference. What makes it such a great matchup, and what was it about Jaedon today that made him get the better of Great today?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: They're both really good players.

They're versatile. They can hit jump shots, drive the ball, post up, so they're not one-dimensional bigs. They can do everything.

Jaedon made some jump shots which kind of got him going. Osobor is very good. The last time we played him, he had seven assists, so we changed our whole scheme as to how we played him. We didn't want to double him right away because he had seven assists and they were getting three-point shots. So we went into the game and said let's make him make twos and not give him threes. You have to change the way you play he's so good.

**Q. With LeDee off the court and Great Osobor in on the game, was there a thought to putting Jay Pal on Great at all? You decided to go with Heide, but was there a thought to go with Jay Pal at all?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah. We were thinking Elijah or Jay Pal, trying to front them. But they run such good set plays, it's not like he just comes down to the block. They cross-screen for him and duck him in different ways. He's hard -- for a guy that's not as big and strong as he is to guard. We did our best. We were fortunate that we came away with a win today.

**Q. You're down 17. Similar thing happened against Colorado State at home. Came back and just roared past them. What is it about this team? Were you nervous on the bench, or just kind of like this is what our team does, and we'll be fine?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I mean, like I said, if you are going to be behind, it's better in the start of the game to be 17 down. If that was the second half, I think we would have been in trouble.

We find a way to fight our way back in. I was hoping to be under ten going into halftime, to be honest with you. If we could be under ten, I would feel pretty good about it, and I think it was three. We exceeded what my expectation was going into halftime.

A three-point game at halftime, we were feeling pretty good about ourselves. To get down and fight our way back, we felt like we had to change the momentum of the game, so we wanted to start the second half and build on that momentum, and I think we did.

**Q. You held Utah State to 32% from the field in the second half. I know the switch kind of happened halfway through that first half. But specifically in the second half, what did you see different from your team defensively that really shut Utah State's offense down?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I don't think we shut them down. I think we disrupted. We pick up on the full court, and we deny the point guard. We make other guys initiate the offense. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't.

They're such a great set play team that if we could disrupt their sets and make them maybe shorten their playbook or run stuff out of character or what they're used to running, sometimes that's good for us. I thought we disrupted.

They didn't turn it over much. I think the turnovers, we had five, they had eight. Both teams took care of the ball. I thought we set the pace of the game with our pressure.

**Q. You guys have been the best program in the conference for a long time, but there's upsets all over the country this time of year. What is it about your program that's had so much success in this tournament every year making the Finals?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Just because I don't think we have to rely on our offense to win. We can suffer through a bad offensive performance and hang in the game long enough and give ourselves a chance to win at the end.

So I think it's our defense that separates us, and that's what we rely on. And I tell them, at some point we're going to find something that works. It may not work for the first half. It may not work for three-quarters of the game, but we'll find something to put it in. We have to hang in the game long enough till we find that thing that works. We rely on our defense and our rebounding.

**Q. Darius Brown played 36 minutes tonight. You guys held him to 3 for 11 from the floor. What helped defend a guy like that?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I mean, he's everything to them. He plays 40 minutes a game usually, and he makes timely, important shots. We were fortunate he didn't make a lot of threes tonight. He makes dagger threes against everybody. And he had a couple of looks, and we were fortunate they didn't go in.

Maybe it's a fact he played back-to-back games, which is the only time he's going to have to do it. In the NCAA Tournament he'll be sensational because he'll have a game and a day between to recover. He's so important to them, and that's why he is a first-time all conference guard.

**Q. You had five guys in double figures tonight. Three of them were guards. We know guard play is very critical this time of the year. What can you say about Lamont and Darrion and how they ran the show, how the team only had five turnovers?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Lamont and Darrion are great. They're Final Four starting guards. They should be good. They're used to playing this time of the year. I thought Reese not only was making shots says, but I thought he got offensive rebounds. He was running balls down. He did other things to affect the game other than just shoot it in.

The same thing with Micah. Micah affects the game even when the shot is not going in. When they're both making shots, then they really impact the game. So hopefully that continues tomorrow night and into the NCAA Tournament.

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## Utah State Aggies

## Coach Danny Sprinkle

## Great Osobor

## Ian Martinez

### Postgame Press Conference

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THE MODERATOR: For Utah State we have student-athletes, Great Osobor, Ian Martinez.

Coach Danny Sprinkle, thoughts on today's game?

DANNY SPRINKLE: I thought it was a competitive game. I want to give San Diego State credit. They were the tougher team, the more physical team. They kind of brought the fight, and we didn't respond at times.

That's what San Diego State does to people. You have to punch back, and I thought we did early. We had some careless fouls. Great picking up his second. He's too good of a player to pick up a foul like that, and that changed the game. I think they outscored us by 14 the last six and a half minutes of that first half, but it was toughness plays.

We didn't box out at the free-throw line. When we did get it, they just took it from us. There was a lot. I thought we had probably six, seven rebounds tonight where we got it, and they just took it from us. And that's a toughness issue that we're going to correct before the NCAA Tournament.

A lot of credit. I was concerned before the game with Micah Parrish and Reese Waters -- Dixon-Waters. Because they're really, really good scorers. They were due to break out at some point. Like, they're too talented of scorers to play how they kind of have been playing. I thought both of those guys were terrific today.

LeDee got in foul trouble too, but I thought he came out the second half, and he came out with a different mindset. They went to him right away, and it seemed like he scored five or six right in a row and kind of got them rolling.



We couldn't get shots. We had a couple good looks from three in that second half, and we just didn't make them. We were 5 of 20. It seemed like Ian was the only one that kind of made them all game.

We had some pretty good looks. Against a good defensive team like San Diego State, you have to make those to have a chance.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Coach, talk about moving forward. Obviously you wanted to win tonight, and you want to win this tournament. You're going to play somebody you haven't seen all year, they haven't seen you. Talk about what are the one or two things your team really needs to do well moving forward to advance in this tournament. You have some good inside and outside play. Give us a couple of things that, boy, if we tighten up a couple of these areas, we have a chance to make a dent in the tournament next week?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: We need to get tougher and a lot more physical. That showed tonight, and we're going to find a way to get that done. I promise you that.

**Q. How do you do that?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: We'll find out in practice. We'll be a lot better in that first round of the NCAA Tournament.

Then we have to clean up -- sometimes we play a little bit too much iso ball. The ball gets sticky, and we don't have enough ball and body movement at times, and that's when our offense gets a little stagnant, so we have to correct that.

**Q. Great, how do you feel like that second foul and then kind of sitting for a while impacted your performance because you started out pretty well and then petered out going into the second half?**

GREAT OSOBOR: Yeah, as a veteran leader on this team I need to be better to know that I can't pick that second foul



up. Then I think I sat for like the last eight minutes of the first half. Then it was just getting back into rhythm. I think it took me a little too long to get back into rhythm after that.

You know, I just need to be better knowing when to reach and stuff like that.

**Q. For both of you players. 45 total fouls in this game. How did how the officials were calling this game change how your offensive approach develop throughout the game?**

IAN MARTINEZ: We knew it was going to be a physical game, so personally we weren't expecting for anything. We knew it was going to be tough the way San Diego State plays. So, yeah, our mentality was just kind of control what we can control, don't worry about the rest, and we just have to do what the game plan, you know -- what Coach said. Yeah, we didn't do it at the best of our abilities, but we just got to be better next time.

GREAT OSOBOR: Yeah, the whole tournament I feel like they've been happy with the whistle, and we thought, Okay, we're going to be physical, but obviously, you have to be physical without fouling at this level because San Diego State is a really good, physical team.

They exposed some stuff like us coming down on drives and stuff. We need to be better and get better for that for the NCAA Tournament. Big credit to them. They won today.

**Q. This is for both of you guys. The student section was up in the upper bowl, and throughout the game you could rarely hear what they were saying or chanting. How do you think that affected momentum shifts for you guys?**

IAN MARTINEZ: When we're at home, we always have a great crowd. So at times I feel like that energy could have helped us a little bit more, especially being away from home.

Yeah, definitely we could have benefited from that in the runs that we had during the game. Also, you know, coming back from when the other teams got on the run.

GREAT OSOBOR: Yeah, obviously the HURD is a big part of who we are at Utah State. Big appreciation for them even showing up in Vegas. It speaks of their love for the university and their love for us.

I wish they could have been right there like they normally are in The Speck, but you have to deal with this part of the game, you know.

**Q. Coach, with your experiences in the NCAA Tournament, how do you get across the urgency of the next five or six days that are coming knowing it's a one-game season? How do you react to that and all that good stuff? Talk about just the next four, five days for you guys, the urgency of, hey, there's no more tomorrow. We have about five or six minutes like you did here into the first half, start of the second half. Our hard work of six months is over.**

DANNY SPRINKLE: What was the beginning part of that question?

**Q. With your experience with the successes of the NCAA Tournament, talking about how you get across the urgency of what they're facing ahead coming up in the next six, seven days and to understand that every four-minute time-out, every careless turnover, every careless foul adds up and could lead to a disaster?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: Yeah, we only have a handful of guys that have played in the NCAA Tournament or have witnessed it. You have to play desperate. You have to play desperate, and you have to be tough and physical. I expect our team to respond.

Sometimes losing games helps you win the next game. I think that's going to be the case with this because it showed what we need to work on this time of year. When it's March, you have to put your big boy pants on, man. It's "go time." We had a couple of guys that did not do that today. We'll make sure that they're ready whether it's Thursday or Friday, whenever we play.

The urgency and desperation you have to play with every possession, every free-throw box-out, you have to set great screens and take care of the basketball because one bad turnover, one missed box-out can end your season.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Thank you, men. Questions for Coach.

**Q. Two questions, tactical. One when Great got his second foul, you decided not to play him. Dutch, who almost never plays guys with two fouls, played Jaedon LeDee. Was that just a function of the score, or what was the thinking there?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: Yeah, we try not to play guys with two fouls too. There's been a couple of times, like actually yesterday we had to do it with one of our guards. But we knew if Great was in there, they'd just keep throwing it into LeDee. Both of those two are two of the best players in the

country at drawing fouls.

With the lead that we had at the time, we didn't want to risk getting Great his third foul. I would rather try to go in up 10 or 11, but then it just got out of hand there. Obviously Trammell hit a huge shot at the end of the half that we didn't contest.

That's what they do. That's why they're a great program. They fight you for 40 minutes, and they make you earn it. I knew they were going to get back into the game. I was hoping we would make a couple of shots or make some more toughness plays, but when you are playing a great team, that's what happened.

**Q. Late in the game you only had three team fouls, and you start fouling to get to seven. I think it was still almost three minutes left.**

DANNY SPRINKLE: Yeah.

**Q. What was the thinking there?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: I didn't want to get it to where it was a 10, 12 point game and there's only two minutes left. Then you're just in a rush to foul. I wanted to get those fouls out of the way, so that way we could kind of hopefully get some of the guys that we wanted for them to shoot free-throws to get up there and we could just kind of elongate the game.

**Q. Mason Falslev had a couple of crafty finishes at the rim that really just showed how talented of a player he is, but he only he ended up playing 19 minutes. Was that more of a coaching decision, or was that because of the shoulder injury?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: Mostly the injury. He kind of banged it up a little bit in the second half -- early in the second half, when he went up to contest. I think Parrish hit a three, and he went up to contest and kind of jerked, and I saw him kind of holding it.

**Q. I also have two questions. This isn't the way you drew up the tournament to end. What did you say in the locker room to ease the loss?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: I told them we have a lot of work to do. Thank God that we still have one more game. A lot of teams don't have another game. We have a chance to bounce back from some of the things that I've kind of mentioned that we need to work on. We're very fortunate that we have another game to hopefully correct that.

**Q. I hope this is a little bit of a different question, but**

**how are you going to use this loss to build for the NCAA Tournament?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: Any time you lose, it shows what you need to work on. We still have to clean some things up, even though it's March, like every team. Going into this tournament, we are going to have to play -- we're going to have to be running on a high level if we want to have a chance. Because every team we play from here on out is going to be a great team.

It will be similar to a Mountain West type schedule. Every night, there's no days off. We'll have to clean up a lot of things offensively with kind of our flow and our pace, and we've got to be tougher on the boards.

**Q. In a Big 12 tournament before I've heard Bill Self saying one of the thrills of going to the NCAA is that all the teams in the conference are just so sick of each other. This league from afar, it looked so rugged this year. Do you have that feeling going into the tournament?**

DANNY SPRINKLE: Even looking at all these signs, I'm tired of seeing some of these logos. It is, but that's the great thing about the Mountain West is it builds you for the tournament because every game we play is like a tournament game.

The atmospheres that we play in, the venues in the Mountain West Conference are tremendous. The intensity, the physicality, all that is going to help our whole entire league once we get to the tournament.

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