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SDSU Men's Basketball vs. Chaminade – Preview Quotes

October 30, 2018

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"We'll start off with putting Jeremy Hemsley right on the spot. It's coach Dutcher's birthday today, how old is your head coach, Jeremy?"

Hemsley: "I did not know it is his birthday today. I just found out right now. I'm going to say 50, 50s?"

"You're starting for sure. Fifty-nine today. I love my guard. We're excited to get the exhibition part of our schedule going this Thursday with Chaminade coming to town. Everyone knows we had a close scrimmage against USC. It was great to see our guys against someone else other than ourselves. They're tired of beating up on each other. It's the same story coaches are telling across the country; they're ready to play someone else. We're excited to get our young guys in front of a crowd. Jeremy and Devin, my senior guards, experienced that, but to put the young guys out with the bright lights in front of the Viejas crowd, it's going to be exciting to see how they respond to that. We'll kick off the exhibition game on Thursday and then start the regular season Tuesday against Arkansas-Pine Bluff."

On Chaminade not playing in Maui Classic this year:

"I'm sure Chaminade would like to be in it every year, but the organizers got them playing every other year in the event. This year they're not in it, so we're playing them in exhibition. I know they're going to head from here to play the University of Arizona, another team in the Maui Classic with us, so I think they've tried to help them get some games outside of the event that are still high-profile for them, whether it's an exhibition or in regular season. I know their kids are like ours, they want to play the highest level of competition they can, and so this gives Chaminade a chance to get to play some Division 1 opponents, but yet not be in the Maui."

On the Maui Invitational field:

"Well my greatest fear is when Chaminade dropped out, that we're Chaminade, so that was my only concern. Maui this year is an elite eight. We open with Duke and then we'll have the winner or loser of Auburn-Xavier and then the other side is Arizona-Gonzaga, Illinois and Iowa State. So, it's an elite eight field and that's exciting for us and will give us an opportunity to see where we are as a program early in the season. Regardless of what happens there, the season lays in front of us. Obviously, everything we do is to get ready for the conference season so it'll give us a good early test to see where we are as a team and what we have to work on."

On how the young guys are doing:

"I've set the mindset with them, I asked them early when they got here, 'How do freshman play here at San Diego State?' I got the answer I wanted as I work with them: they defend. They defend. That's how you get on the floor as a freshman, you play great defense. So I wanted them to have a defensive mindset, not thinking they had to come out here and score 20 points to find their way on the floor. They have to come in there and defend at an elite level that we have over the years and let their offense come."

On what's the challenge teaching new players:

"Some of them, they're really long and athletic so they have always been the biggest guy on the team, but that doesn't mean they're the biggest guy on this team. They might have guarded the center their whole career and now they're guarding a small forward or they're guarding an athletic guard. Six-six isn't the tallest kid on the team anymore and so they have to guard on the perimeter, they have to move their feet, they have to stay in front of people. [With] the bigs, the adjustment is, bigs play on eggshells in high school. Every time they turn and someone falls down, it's a foul. So now they get to use those bodies that they've been blessed with and play a more physical brand of basketball, so that's an adjustment. So lots of adjustments, but I like the way they're learning. I thought they did a good job up at USC in their first action against someone other than ourselves and I think they're going to all contribute."

On how he coaches an exhibition game:

"Well, up at USC I wasn't really concerned with playing my best players the significant minutes. I wanted to play the guys that probably are not going to get a lot of minutes, to see what they're like in a game situation, because I already know what I'm going to get from Jeremy and Devin and some of my veterans. I played the young guys maybe a little bit more than a regular game to start just to see how they respond. Then defensively, I did a few things at USC that I wanted to see if we were good at, whether it be the post double. We didn't double them last year. We scrimmaged them last year and I don't think we needed a double this year, but I wanted to see what our guys looked like doing it, so I put them in some situations that maybe I wouldn't have done if I was trying to go in with the intention of saying 'I have to win this scrimmage.' I'll do the same thing against Chaminade. I'll play all my healthy players. Hopefully it's 10 guys that will be available and I'll throw them all out there for significant minutes and not worry about the result, but worry about how they look leading into our season opener."

On what young guys on the team have impressed him:

"I think they've all impressed me. They're all different. We haven't had Nathan Mensah because he had a finger injury that he'll have re-evaluated on Thursday, so hopefully he'll be cleared to start practicing, but he hasn't really been involved in a full practice in four weeks. I'm excited to get Nathan back. Joel (Mensah) has done a good job, you know, he does what he does. He does Joel. He shoots the 15-foot jump shot in. He shoots it every time he gets it and he's confident in it. At USC, he made four of them, they all went in and so our kids were excited for him. That's the best part when the kids are excited for another. Ed Chang is a very good three-point shooter that is trying to catch up to speed on defense at the college level. Aguek Arop is long and is probably the most-able to contribute right away, in my estimation, because he guards at a level and he rebounds. He's a special rebounder. He goes every time. He's long. He's got a seven-one wingspan and he's the most versatile probably to help us at both ends. I think they're all able to contribute. I think Adam Seiko, our redshirt-freshman from last year, was a little nervous in the first half at USC but settled in and made a couple threes and guarded like I knew he could guard. They're all feeling their way and they're gaining my confidence, which is the most important thing."

On Chaminade's big upset over Virginia years ago:

"You had to watch [that Virginia game] on replay. How old were you [Jeremy]? My goodness. Ralph Sampson. I remember it. I think there were only four channels when that game was played."

On what his expectations are for Devin Watson going into the season:

"Be a great leader. Take care of the basketball. Get assists. We know Devin is a scoring point guard, so as a coach you always walk the line—you want a scoring point guard, and that's what he is, a scoring point guard—so there are times that he's going to take some shots that are going to be difficult. I remember at the end of USC, he shot one probably from eight feet beyond NBA-range and he went to the bench. He said, 'Are you going to take me out for taking that shot?' I said, 'I'm going to take you out for not making it. So if you make it, I might not take you out, but if you make shots like that and miss them, I may take you out.' That's just being honest. Devin is going to take some hard shots, but I want him confident. I want all my guys confident. As long as we have more assisted baskets than we did last year, then I'm going to be happy."

On Malachi Flynn and what he's shown the coaches since he transferred here from Washington State:

"He's an elite-level scorer, so Jeremy is going to be guarding, in practice, maybe the best guard he's going to face all year, in practice every day. I know Jeremy makes his life tough. Jeremy is an elite defender. To go against Malachi every day, to have to guard him, is going to help Jeremy get better. Malachi can score the ball. It will be a long year for him, obviously, to sit a full year knowing that you're a really good player is tough on anybody, but it helps his coach sleep at night knowing that when Jeremy and Devin graduate, I'll have a fourth-year junior guard to step into a prominent role on the team next year."

On if there are things he feels the team is either ahead on, or behind on, in practice:

"I think the defense is ahead of the offense right now, in my opinion. We spend a lot of time on the defense like we always do, but offensively, the young guys are still trying to learn where they're supposed to be. So sometimes, they're in the wrong spot. We give them some freedom — our offense is freedom within framework — so we have some things that we want, but ultimately you end up having to play the game and stay out of each other's way. Sometimes I look up and the freshmen are in someone's way, trying to please me, but in the wrong spot. That just comes with time and experience. The more we play, the more they get comfortable, the better we'll be offensively. I like the fact that up at USC, in the first half, we had 14 baskets and 10 of them were assisted. I know we are playing the right way. But, we had nine turnovers and then only had four in the second half. We have to take care of the ball, but a lot of those were youthful mistakes. Like I said, we have 11 eligible players, and eight of them are freshmen or sophomores, so it's a lot of youth on the floor at any moment. As they get more comfortable and play with greater confidence, then I think the offense will catch up."

San Diego State Senior Guard Jeremy Hemsley**On how the young guys are doing:**

"I think they're doing good. It's always nerve-racking as a freshman just to be in this process and leading up to that first game, but I think they're doing a good job. I think they're mature for their age and wise beyond their years and I think that they've done a good of just listening to the older guys on the team and buying into what the coaches are saying. I really do think that they're going to do a good job of helping the team this year, for sure."

On if he's aware of Chaminade's history and their big upset over Virginia:

"I've actually watched a lot of their games, even before I came to college. I was always seeing them upset that top team, or that top team taking them for granted or taking them lightly, and I know that's not something you can do. I know a lot about them, for sure. But yeah, I saw that game [against Virginia]. I watched that game."

On not letting Chaminade sneak up on the team in this exhibition game:

"It gives you a mindset where you know you can't take them lightly. You know you can't treat this like a game that you think you're going to win. It's just like any other game — it's a competitive game, it's a competitive team, and we're going to have to go out there and give our best effort just like we would any other team."

On what he's learned about senior leadership from watching Trey Kell:

"I would say, one thing I learned from Trey was just being patient with the younger guys and not to just get on them or yell at them or just say the wrong thing because being a freshman, you're already thinking so much. You're already in your head so much and trying your best not to do the wrong thing. You're trying everything you can to please the coaches and your teammates. I think from my position now, it's pretty much just the big brother role. I'm there to calm the guys down or maybe just to say something that they don't see or tell them something that the coaches may not have time to say during practice just because of the speed of practice. My role is just to be that big brother and be that person that the younger guys can lean on."

On how he has seen Devin Watson grow as a senior and leader on the court:

"I think Devin is completely different when it comes to the player that he is now, and the person he is now. I think everything for him is just clear right now, and I think it shows when he's on the basketball court. Another thing that I've noticed from Devin is the leadership skills he's had this year. I've been impressed by that, and I think he's done a good job of keeping his head on his shoulders and just keep being a leader. I really do think Devin has made a complete change and I think everyone will see it on the court."

On heading into his final year at San Diego State:

"It's crazy because thinking back to my freshman year, I couldn't even think this far ahead. I never even thought of my senior year. I'm just trying to stay in the moment and just appreciate everything that's here because it goes by so fast, and all of this could be taken away from me tomorrow, so I'm just trying to enjoy the moment and enjoy being around my coaches and my teammates. Like you said, it's surreal. I can't believe that I'm a senior, but I know it will be a memorable one because I feel the best I've ever felt. I'm just taking everything a day at a time and I'm really enjoying it."

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