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SDSU Men's Basketball vs. Texas Southern – Preview Quotes

Nov. 13, 2018

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening statement:

"I was telling Jeremy (Hemsley) up in my office that it seems like forever since we've played a game, so we're excited to get on the floor tomorrow against Texas Southern. They're like a lot of SWAC teams: they're trying to make their entire budget here in the preseason by playing guarantee games. They opened the year at Baylor and won that game. Went from there to Gonzaga, got beat. Went from Gonzaga to Iowa State, got beat. They'll come to play us tomorrow and I know they've still got games with Oregon. They must have the toughest out-of-conference schedule in the country. I really like their team. They were an NCAA tournament team last year. They have three fifth-year seniors in the starting lineup. Another senior. They have a 7-foot-2 dynamic center that's averaging, I think, 14 points, 14 rebounds a game, a couple of block shots; anything around the rim he's going to dunk. They have two transfers from LSU that are obviously SEC talent. They have another transfer from Colorado State. They play with toughness. It's not what they run, it's that you can just see on tape, and it comes through on tape that they're very tough. It will be a great challenge for us tomorrow night at Viejas."

On if he's worried about tomorrow's game:

"I'm 100 percent worried, but that's what they pay me to be, is worried. My job is to get my team ready to play. We will have things that we will concentrate on in practice today. We've had two really good days of practice and so that always gives me confidence moving forward that we're getting better."

On how he prepares his team for the games ahead:

"We have a saying in coaching that 'tape doesn't lie.' So, all we have to do is show them tape of the opponent tomorrow night and they can see that they're talented and they play hard and that they're scrappy. If they pay attention in film then they know what's in store for them tomorrow."

On if making three pointers is an intangible part of SDSU's offense:

"I think that's basketball now, whether it starts at the NBA level or you see at the high school level that you have to shoot the three to be successful. It stretches the defense, it opens up driving lanes and so we shoot it at every position. Jalen McDaniels: improved three-point shooter, Jeremy: three-point shooter, Jordan Schakel: three-point shooter, even Nolan Narain as a five-man has an ability to shoot the three. Matt Mitchell can shoot the three. We shoot it well from the perimeter, but we can't live and die on the three. The ability to shoot the three should open up the paint for us where we can attack to the rim and get paint touches and score layups because we can shoot the three. Not because we're great drivers, but because we're dangerous from three-point range."

On Duke's Zion Williamson's talent this season:

"I haven't watched the Kentucky game at all. I saw the score. I saw some of the Army game. He's just kind of a freak of nature type of a player. He's at 285 and very athletic and the thing that people discount — they always put everything in athleticism; he has work ethic. He is a winner so he plays hard all the time. So, athleticism is one thing but you pair that with a great desire to be successful and that obviously makes him the player he is right now. It's a long college season and so we'll see if he continues to get better and better weekly, which I assume he will. They'll get more defined roles as they move on and it'll be a great challenge for us to play the top team in the country early next week."

On tomorrow's game preparing SDSU to face Duke:

"I think the veterans will be ready to play no matter what. It's getting the young guys minutes and game experience so when they step on that stage, they're prepared. Every day in practice or in games is a learning opportunity so, like I said, I take great comfort that Jeremy and Devin have been through these games. They've played great teams and whether it's tomorrow getting ready to play against a team that's not named Duke, or next week when we play Duke, I'll rely on my senior leadership to get the rest of the team ready to play."

On freshman player's improvement so far:

"Well, yesterday in practice we went up and down a little bit in scrimmage. Nate Mensah had a score of like, Jeremy said 13 straight points. We had a real good segment, so when you see segments like that, you get encouraged that he's getting better and he's getting more comfortable. He's still lagging a little bit on the defensive end knowing where his man is, but hopefully that will come with time. Aguek was good. Ed's getting better. Joel always plays hard. Adam is playing with great confidence. So, they're all new guys that are, as fast as we want it to go, it's going to take a while. We'll get them in games, they'll make mistakes, we'll teach to those mistakes then will get back out next week and throw them out there again. I think the encouraging thing is, as they continue to get better our team will get better. Like I said, I have great confidence in my six returning veterans that they're ready to play at a high level right now. It's to get the bench developed and to get the guys coming off the bench to come in and not have any slippage when the veterans aren't in."

On San Diego's basketball success as a whole:

"Sam Scholl is a great friend of mine at USD. He has what all coaches want; he has a senior-laden team, so it's a big opportunity for the Toreros to have a better year and to compete for a WCC title. Obviously, Point Loma with what they've done, UCSD making the move to Division I. I think it's good for San Diego. It's not only good for the universities, but it's good for high school basketball to have all these good college programs in this city and hopefully we will all hold our end up and we'll all be successful at the end of the season."

On Texas Southern's ability to draw fouls:

"They really drive to the basket. They attack the basket off the bounce and whatever they're driving, the danger is you're putting your hands on them and you're reaching out and swiping the ball. The only guy we've had in foul trouble is Jalen. He's picked up two fouls in our exhibition game and then our first game, so a lot of that is a by-product of me having him starting at the center position. I'm not sure how long I'll go with that. I like to play the guys that practice and I'm starting the five guys that are at practice every day. So moving forward, will that change? It could, but right now Jalen is the one that's got to avoid the first foul and be protective of his first foul. He's going to get one just playing, so you don't want one with a silly slap at the ball or something that can be avoided by just playing with a higher IQ early in the game."

On if playing a physical team like Texas Southern is a helpful precursor to the games in Maui:

"Texas Southern is going to be a real test. These guys have been through a ton of college games. When you're talking three fifth-year seniors in the starting lineup, you're talking a lot of experience. Nothing we do is going to rattle them; they've seen it all. Their biggest disadvantage heading into the game is that they're going to be on tired legs. You can't play in Ames, Iowa, last night and then fly across the country and play us and be at your absolute best. Now, they're going to be at their best considering they played four games in a short amount of time, but they will put us to the ultimate test tomorrow."

San Diego State Guard Jeremy Hemsley

On his feelings towards tomorrow's game:

"They're a real scrappy team and they play hard. Like Dutch said, they have three fifth-year seniors so they're a team that has leadership and they have guys who have been through the wars and guys that know how to lead the younger guys. It will be a good game. They're a team that knows how to fight and I'm looking forward to it."

On how he prepares his teammates for the games ahead:

"I just try to remind them that you just need to take things a day at a time. You really can't look ahead and you can't try to create something in the future when it's not even there. So, I think we've done a good job of just staying in the moment and just focusing on the practices that we have in front of us and not worrying about the games or any type of matchup that we have in the future."

On how long it takes to play comfortably with the freshman:

"It doesn't take long, like Dutch said, it comes with experience. I think they have the opportunity to show and gain trust from their peers and the coaches in practice so I think that they've done a good job. I don't think it really takes long, it really depends on the player."

On what area needs improving:

"I would say our offense. I know Dutch said a few times that our defense was ahead of our offense and I think that this past week that we improved on our offense. I think we slowed down a little bit, just taking our time and not really rushing things and taking care of the ball."