



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State-Arkansas-Pine Bluff Postgame Quotes November 6, 2018

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"It was good to get on the floor for the opener. I was concerned about it, maybe overly concerned. I knew they were going to play us 40 minutes of zone. I knew in the KenPom rankings they forced the fifth-most turnovers in the country last year, so I know their zone was effective. They trap the baseline. They trap it sometimes up top and so I thought the work we did about throwing it in the low post and skipping it opposite, I thought our kids followed the game plan really well. Of the teams I watched play them last year, they had a tough time getting the high post. I thought we put in the high post when we wanted to. We put it in to Jalen (McDaniels) and he's a wonderful play-maker up there. He had five assists, one turnover and as a coach I always preach sharing the ball, anyone who's been here knows that. We had 24 baskets, 18 of them assisted. And I told the guys, the challenge is I knew we would have to move the ball against the zone because it's hard to get a quick shot against the zone. Can we make that same type of effort when we play a man-to-man team? Can we move the ball like that and share the ball when we're playing against man-to-man? And so that's the task I put out to them, I want to share the ball more than we have in the exhibition game and obviously this is a good start tonight."

On Nathan Mensah's and Nolan Narain's performances tonight:

"I wanted to get them both minutes and I didn't really know what I'd get from them because Nathan missed four weeks of practice and you're usually as good as you practice. He'd only practiced two or three days, but I wanted to throw him out there and let him get a little feel for game action. Aguek (Arop) obviously missed nine days earlier in the preseason and he missed three or four more with the hip strain, so we got him out there. I wanted to see how he moved and get him a little flow because it's different when the lights are on. So the task now is someone told me we're eight days between games. This is the time they have to get to work. Now that they're healthy, I need to get them up to speed. And I thought the veteran six players I had out there played great. They knew where each other were, they moved well together. The task is the freshman can't slow that team down. They have to catch up and move at the same pace and know where each other are and know where they're supposed to be without having to think about it. When they're thinking a to b to c then they're not playing basketball, they're just trying to move to a spot. And so I've got to get all the freshman up to speed. Joel (Mensah) and Nate and Aguek and Ed (Chang), I need to get them all up to that speed. I think Adam (Seiko) is a little bit further along obviously because he was in the program last year, but these guys need the practice time and I need the eight days to get them ready for the next game."

On progression with playing zone teams since Gonzaga:

"A couple years ago when we played at Gonzaga, they surprised us with the zone. We thought they were going to man us and they, three-quarters of the game, zoned us. Cal last year, they came back from Maui, they pressed everybody all game and played all man-to-man and then I think they played St. Mary's and played all man-to-man and pressed, and we're the very next game and they played us 40 minutes of zone. So the nice thing with this game is we weren't surprised, we knew this team was going to zone. And so the two days we spent really concentrating on our zone offense payed off. A lot was due to the Cal game because we didn't put the ball down on the baseline enough against Cal and so we wanted to throw the ball down low and then skip the ball across the court because we knew that's where they were susceptible. The kids followed the game-plan and we got great opportunities off that."

On the 8-0 run early in the second half:

"I heard you talking about it, I can only remember Jeremy's dunk and it was kind of a reverse dunk and I was just really happy it went in because I was going to be really mad if he missed it. One of the things I told the team after the game, I said, 'As soon as Devin Watson completes a lob to Matt Mitchell, I will take the whole team out to Wing Stop for something to eat.' They threw it away against Chaminade, they threw it away three times today. As soon as they complete one of those, we'll get something to eat."

On senior guards' performance:

"Devin might have played his best floor game that I've seen him play here. I mean, we were just running off those high ball screens and he was finding everybody. He was finding the low post, he was finding the skip for the three. His floor game was incredible and when you add to that how he shot the ball, but I didn't feel like he was out there punting shots, I think he played off the other people. He was the catalyst for a lot we did offensively up top. We knew he wanted to ball screen the top and he was so good at it that it created all sorts of looks for the team."

On Nathan Mensah's development in the program:

"I think he'll catch up right away. We had high hopes for him starting practice in the fall, but with him out, he lost some ground. And even today I think he had a block and changed a shot and he's just trying to feel his way out there, but he's going to be a big-time shot blocker. One of the things I talked with the team that I didn't like, we got out-rebounded again. I think our rebounding will improve when we play Nate and Aguek more because they're both really good rebounders and sometimes you can work on rebounding, but sometimes you got to play guys that just rebound. So I think as they get more minutes, our rebounding will get better."

On players' work outside of practice:

"They put their work in. All my veterans put their work in. And Jalen's to the point where I almost want him to slow down a little bit because he puts in a lot of individual work and I don't want his legs tired. He is relentless with working on his game and I think it shows. He looks so comfortable out there in three-point range, driving and passing the ball. And he has a few moments where he fumbles the crossovers or something like that, but that's not a big concern to me. I think he's going to master all of that before the year's over."

On if he has to encourage the players to put in work outside of practice:

"They just did it on their own. They just get in there and get their shots up on their own. Like I said, I can't mandate that they do it and we can't be there when they do it because it will be additional hours. This is just something that they decide to get in and that's the beauty of the J.A.M. Center. They can get in there 24 hours a day to get the shots if they want. So it's a great facility and we're grateful to have it."

On what he's seen differently from G Jeremy Hemsley:

"Jeremy just looks so comfortable and happy. Sometimes it's just happiness. He looks like he's happy to be out there. It could be as easy as that. He's enjoying his senior year. He's having fun out on the floor, and he's having fun on the practice floor. Jeremy is really enjoying his senior year and every moment of it, so that's great to see as a coach."

On Jalen McDaniels getting into foul trouble:

"Well, the only guy I talked about fouling with before the game was Jalen [McDaniels], and he got two quick fouls, so I didn't do a very good job. I mean, Coach [Steve] Fisher always used to say the same thing to Jalen: when you're a good player, you have to be protective of your first foul. You can't get a cheap one with a grab or a reach, and the first foul he got was when he reached in and slapped a guy. All of a sudden, you get a real one — your second one — and you're on the bench. Jalen has to be protective of his first foul. This is the second game in a row where he's in foul trouble in the first half and he had to go to the bench. I think a lot of that too, is when I'm playing him at the five, I don't want to do that all year. I'd like to move him back to the power forward where he can play on the perimeter more. When he's in there wrestling with those big, strong guys, it's always dangerous to get a foul as you're trying to fight for position. That's not where I want to play Jalen all year. When I get back Nolan [Narain] healthy and Nate [Mensah] healthy and get them on the floor, I'd like Jalen to play more facing the basket and defensively playing on the perimeter."

On McDaniels' technical foul:

"They turned and Nolan [Narain] got hit with an elbow, but the ref said it was a natural basketball movement. They were in his cylinder and he just turned to make a basketball play and Nolan got hit, which I accept. Jalen took umbrage with it and decided he was going to talk to the guy. Nothing happened. They didn't even push each other. They just got face-to-face and talked a little bit."

Senior Guard Devin Watson

On finger injury:

"It's just a sprain, so I'm icing it and not doing too much with it. It just heals over time."

On being able to relax while injured:

"Yeah it definitely makes you focus up. I have to think about how I hold the ball, shoot the ball, my release. It helped me focus more on my technique."

On the freshman players and what to expect:

"Just how hard they play. You saw them tonight, they're just getting after it. The only thing they have to do is work hard and listen and they're doing a great job at that."

On jump shots:

"Yes, I felt like the ball movement tonight definitely helped with that. The way we were moving the ball as a team. Guys were finding me and I was finding them. It's just fun out there."

On if tonight was all about making a statement:

"No, I just honestly let the game come to me. Most of those threes were just wide open."

On his expression after making a big three-pointer:

"That was a Steph Curry moment. I shot the ball and didn't even look at it. I just turned around and started running down the court."

On the back-to-back scores by Jordan Schakel, Devin and Jeremy Hemsley:

"That was just a lot of ball movement and things like that. It was about teammates finding each other and just having fun out there."

On his last home opener:

"Just taking it one game at a time. I'm not really thinking about anything like that."

On the Mountain West Conference Championship banner reveal:

"That was nice, knowing that we did something like that. If I ever come here in the future and I look up there, I'll know that I left a little bit of a legacy here."

Sophomore Forward Jalen McDaniels

On jump shot improvements since last game:

"I was just trying to hit free throws. I was missing a lot of them so that's what the focus was on. But, I was four-for-six so I did better than last game."

On what changed going into the second half:

"We just turned it up on defense and got the ball up the court fast. We found the open man and our guys hit threes. Transition buckets and layups, that's how we want to play. And when we play like that, that's what happens."

On making a statement this game after a narrow win:

"It was more for us coming here and being focused on a defensive end. Not giving up that many threes. Against Chaminade we gave up those threes, so defensively just coming in and focusing and being better."

On the Mountain West Conference Championship banner reveal:

"It was a cool moment for us. I wish the other guys were here, but I appreciated that."

Arkansas-Pine Bluff Head Coach George Ivory

On team's overall performance:

"I thought we played pretty good. We didn't close out like I thought we should. I thought San Diego State did a great job of executing their offense and making shots. When you play against a good basketball team like this, it shows you where a lot of our weaknesses are at. I thought we did okay. We had a little spurt where they went on a 10, 12-point run. I think when you play against a quality team like that with a quality coach, it helps us later on down the road."

On players getting into foul trouble:

"We did get in foul trouble, but it's teaching our guys things they can't do. When they play against a good team like San Diego State, it's a challenge and the crowd is great. It was pretty good for us to come into this atmosphere."

On G Martaveous McKnight's performance:

"We expect him to do a lot. He played very hard. I thought it was a good game for him against some good talent. I think he did pretty good. We've got to work on some things. I think turnovers — he's trying to force it to get to some guys in the game. Overall, I think he did a great job of keeping us all together. When they [San Diego State] make a big run, he'll come back and bring us together by making a big shot or something. I thought he did a pretty good job."

On his goals for this season:

"We want to compete for the SWAC [Southwestern Athletic Conference] championship, and that's why we came out here to play San Diego State — a very good basketball team that went to the NCAA Tournament last year. They had a solid core of guys come back. I think it will help us see a lot of things we're going to need to work on overall."

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