



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State Men's Basketball Preview Quotes vs. USD Dec. 3, 2018

#### San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

##### **Opening Statement:**

"First of all, I'd like to congratulate football for going to their ninth straight bowl game. That's a heck of an accomplishment and one they should be very proud of. I'm proud of our team. We came back from our first real road game in a tough environment, long travel day and they responded well. They guarded at a really high level. Talked about rebounding, and we rebounded better. Talked about conversion defense, we didn't give up a lot of layups. We're getting better at the things we are working on, and as a coach, that's always a good feeling. On to the next task, which is USD, Wednesday at home. Playing my good friend Sam Scholl. We'll enjoy that game, both of us, and I know one of us will be sad when it's over, but I'm looking forward to meeting him and playing USD on Wednesday."

##### **On the biggest challenges with facing USD:**

"Experience. I think they're one of the oldest teams in the country, experience-wise. I know they start, I think four seniors, and they've got a lot of minutes on the floor together and they're playing like it right now. They're playing like an experienced team. I think some of their young guys are trying to catch up. They run their stuff extremely well and they will present a great challenge on Wednesday."

##### **On the freshmen's performance in Saturday's game:**

"To go on the road and have quality minutes from my three freshmen that played in the game — Adam Seiko, Aguek Arop and Nathan Mensah — all played well. Nathan had 10 rebounds. He followed that up — he had 11 rebounds versus Jackson State and followed it up with 10, so that's helped our rebounding. Aguek is getting more comfortable out there. He had a couple nice rebounds, had a nice fall-away jump shot at a critical stretch of the game. Guarded better than he has, getting more comfortable than before. Adam, obviously, is ahead of all of them because he's been in the program a year. To throw three freshmen out there on the road, I thought they did a really good job. Part of it was that we were playing with the lead. It's always easier when you're playing eight or nine points up. One mistake is not going to cost you at that point. I thought they played really well."

##### **On takeaways from the Illinois State game heading into USD:**

"It's just growth as a team. It wouldn't matter if we were playing USD, or Cal on Saturday — we have to keep getting better. Each team we play presents different challenges. USD runs a Princeton-type offense. They're not methodical and slow with it, but they run a lot of the same actions we see against Air Force. We'll work a day or two on guarding some of those actions and try to answer the next challenge. Every time is a challenge [when] you step on the floor, so this will just be the next challenge in line."

##### **On going up against a fellow San Diego-based Division I team and if it creates extra incentive:**

"Obviously we are playing another team in our city, so there's some incentive in that, but we preach all year that this is the nonconference part of the schedule and everything we do now is to prepare us for the Mountain West. This will be a good test for us to see how we're coming as a team. We're nowhere near where we need to be, but I think we are making small steps and we'll see if we can make another step on Wednesday against (USD head coach) Sam (Scholl)'s team."

**On if USD senior forward Isaiah Pineiro plays bigger than his 6'7" frame:**

"Oh yeah. He's really strong. He's tough. I think he's averaging 21 points a game, which is a lot of points in college basketball. Obviously (USD senior guard Olin) Carter shoots at an elite level, (USD senior guard Isaiah) Wright is very good at running the team. They've got experience. They've got toughness. They're playing a schedule themselves that is challenging to them, having played at Mississippi, having played at Washington, home game at Colorado. They play a tough schedule, too. We look at our schedule, having played Xavier, Duke, Iowa State, Illinois State on the road. Both teams are playing competitive, tough schedules so that's why I don't think this game in itself is any more challenging than any we played all year. [For] Both teams."

**On if he feels there's ever competition for a fan base with USD:**

"Being sold out for six or seven straight years, I feel like our fan base is established. I don't think from an attendance standpoint it adds anything to us. Our fans have supported us in every game and will continue to do so as long as we play good basketball, team basketball and represent San Diego State the way we're supposed to."

**On how important it is for him to have his two senior guards in Devin Watson and Jeremy Hemsley:**

"They played massive minutes at Illinois State due to illness and foul trouble. I wanted to give them rest but I don't think I took either one out in the second half. They ended up combined for 40 points, 10 assists and they both played a magnificent floor game for us. Senior guard play – when I said at the beginning of the year that I sleep well because I know I have senior guards – that's the best place to be old at, guard. Jeremy and Devin both provide great leadership and great play on the floor for the Aztecs."

**On what he's seen from freshman forward Nathan Mensah:**

"We've challenged him to be better defensively at helping on ball screens. That's always the greatest challenge for a big man, to be able to stop a guard on a ball screen and be able to get back to your man. We thought he was rebounding with one hand and really have gone after him to go after the ball with two, and he's responded with 11 followed by 10 rebounds, so hopefully that continues. I think when he and Jalen are together, it's that length rebounding-wise that helps. Hopefully his rebounding will continue as the season goes on and that will make us better defensively, and obviously the shot-blocking is always important, and he has that length at the defensive end."

**On team communication and if he thinks sophomore guard Jalen McDaniels has taken on leadership roles:**

"I said that one of the most encouraging things on the road game is that this team really talks to each other on the floor and encourages one another. If there's a mistake made, they'll pull one another aside and say, 'Hey, next time when this happens, we've got to switch quicker, we've got to communicate that better.' Player-driven teams are way better than coach-driven teams, so I think we're finally getting that and especially from our seniors and Jalen, that they're helping the young guys and not getting on them but encouraging them to make better plays and showing them that they believe in them. That kind of leadership usually bodes well for a team over the course of a long season."

**On how Illinois State honored former SDSU head coach Steve Fisher at the game on Saturday:**

"I heard they were going to do something at a timeout, and I think that's just a great honor for Coach. I heard he got a heck of an ovation, and deservedly so. I told him I'm glad he wasn't out there playing. He might have helped them get a win."

**Senior Guard Jeremy Hemsley****On the win at Illinois State:**

"It was a good win. That's a tough team. They play hard and have a lot of good players, and it's always tough to win on the road. I think we did a good job of just staying together. It was our first real road test that wasn't at a neutral site, so I think we did a good job."

**On if there's any extra incentive to beat USD on Wednesday:**

"It's just another game. We know it's a team we can't take lightly. They've got a lot of vets on the team, a lot of returners. They've got a good coach, so we know we've got to be well-prepared like any other game."

**On the performances of the freshmen:**

"I think they've done a good job, coming in and knowing their role. Being a freshman, that's always hard. I think they've done a good job moving at a fast pace and learning at a fast pace."

**On the leadership role as a senior:**

"It's a role you want, as a senior. It's a role you want. You want to be able to be that guy for the younger guys where they can go up to you and ask you what they're doing wrong, or what they can do better. It's a role that I've seen, when I first came in and I had guys like Winston (Shepard) and Skylar (Spencer). I think it's just really being big brother. Being that person that puts the arm around them and letting them know what they're doing right or wrong."

**On how they've gelled as a team so far and the next step they want to take as a unit:**

"I think the chemistry is good. Next step would just to be more consistent. We have some games where the energy is maybe less than it was the game before, so I think our job now is just be consistent on both ends of the floor. Know that we're a good team and just play like it."

**Senior Guard Devin Watson**

**On the win at Illinois State:**

"It was a fun game. We came out with the win."

**On if there's any extra incentive to beat USD on Wednesday:**

"Not really. Just come out and play with the same aggressiveness as the last game. Don't come out slow, just come out with aggressiveness."

**On his performance in Saturday's game:**

"Like I said, it was a fun game. I loved the atmosphere. I was hyped. My teammates were hyped. It was a great game."

**On the performances of the freshmen:**

"I think they played excellent last game. Nate (Mensah) had 10 rebounds. AG (freshman forward Aguek Arop) came up, stepped up, had a big bucket. Think he should have gotten that and-one dunk, but he missed it. I think they played well."

**On the leadership role as a senior:**

"Same as what Jeremy said. Being now that I'm the senior now, the younger guys coming up to me like a big brother. I remember being a sophomore and treating my seniors the same way, so it feels good to be in this position."

**On the ball movement and number of assists per game:**

"I feel like we were just playing free out there. Everybody was in rhythm and everybody was focused. Since everyone was playing free, we weren't even thinking about it. It was just flowing. It was just all in the flow."

**-SDSU-**