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5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182 | (619) 594-5547

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San Diego State-Wyoming Postgame Quotes January 8, 2019

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"I thought the guys really made a step forward today. Without Jeremy (Hemsley), without Nolan (Narain), we got Nathan (Mensah) in the lineup. Everybody got to move a little bit more to their more traditional position: Jalen (McDaniels) to a stretch four, Matt (Mitchell) to a small forward. I thought it was fun to see that for the first time. Even though we play a lot like that during the game, we haven't started like that. So Jeremy being ill today made that a necessity. When we got back from Boise, we landed at noon and we were on the court by one and we went hard. You know, the kind of practice you have when you get beat by 24 points, where everybody has to compete or they're going to get kicked out and nobody got kicked out because they all competed. You can have buy-in when you win games, and you can have buy-in when you lose games. When we lose to Brown and we get 19 down to [California State University] Northridge and we get down 24 to Boise, then they're looking. They're looking for us to say what we need to do to be better. The answer is always there. They need to defend harder for longer. They have to make multiple efforts. I thought tonight they did that. Were they perfect? No, they were nowhere near perfect, but it was a step in the right direction."

On having freshman forward Nathan Mensah in the starting lineup:

"Even though he may not have blocked a few shots, just his size in there makes a difference when they turn into him and he's big. I told Nathan and Joel (Mensah) after the game, 'Every time you step on the floor, it's a learning experience.' We brought them in early for shootaround today, an hour before anybody else. Both of them along with Ed (Chang) and AG (Aguek Arop) because they need the extra work. They came at one o'clock for a two o'clock shootaround so we could show them what they had to do today. Here's what's going to happen, here's what they're trying to do, you have to be ready for this. Normally, if you have experienced guys, you only need to go through it once because they play against them for three or four years. But when you have young bigs, you walk through it, you walk through it, you walk through it. And then the first time in the game it happens and the guy is right where we don't want him to be. As they continue to get experience and they learn how to do things at a game pace, our team will improve."

On if he will consider using tonight's starting lineup again:

"Yeah, absolutely. I don't know if it will be at Jeremy's expense or what will happen. We shoot the ball really well, and we've struggled the last couple of games, but the nice thing with running zone-offense is rarely is it like you're running a play for one particular person. It's moving the ball freely. It's finding Jalen in the high post and kicking it out. We have a lot of dangerous three-point shooters. When they open the zone, Devin (Watson) made threes, Matt (Mitchell) made threes, Jordan (Schakel) made threes, Adam (Seiko) [made threes]. We just have a lot of good three-point shooters. Obviously, it's been very good when we get the lead early. And we've had it the other when the other team jumps on us and it's a fight to come back. It's hard. Wyoming, when they let us get out like that, we were hard to come back against. It seems like the start of the games are very important to us right now."

On his message to the team before the game:

"Just talked about believing in the defense, making multiple efforts. I've got a good coaching staff: Dave Velasquez, Rod Palmer, Jay Morris. They are all vocal, involved in practice. We're growing as a coaching staff. It's not just new players, it's new coaches and everybody feeling their way

and trying to provide what's best for the team. I have a very good coaching staff and they did a really good job preparing the team for tonight's game."

On the team's previous inconsistencies:

"If I had that bottled, I'd win every game. We're just going to go back to work and deliver the same consistent message. It's not up-and-down. It's not yelling at them because they lose or just smiling and patting them on the back when they win. We just have to be consistent. We have to tell them when they're not doing something well and just be business-like about it. We might have to raise our voices from time to time, we tell them that. We love them all, but we owe it to them and the team to push them to be their best. I'm sure as young kids, they thought they played the perfect game defensively [tonight]. So we'll cut the tape and we'll be in tomorrow at one over at the JAM Center and we'll be watching good and bad from today's game, so that on Thursday we can jump into Air Force and get ready to play the Air Force Academy on Saturday."

On balancing tonight's game:

"We're at a point where how we were playing, we can't take anybody lightly. We're not sitting there going, 'Oh, it's Wyoming. We're going to roll over Wyoming."

On Nolan Narain's injury:

"He's just sore and he got stitches. He's being evaluated every day. We're trying to see if he's feeling a little better, but I don't know if we'll have him for Air Force or not. That's more of a doctor's decision than mine."

Senior Guard Devin Watson

On starting out the second half strong shooting:

"I was just trying to facilitate and get my teammates involved. Those two shots – they were just open, so have to take those."

On if he has a different mindset when facilitating and shooting:

"No. I just take what the defense gives me."

On how there was so much success from the three-point line the first half:

"Guys were just feeling it. I could tell at shootaround that guys were focused and dialed in, so I think that carried over to the game."

On how they found confidence in shooting after struggling in Boise:

"Shooters shoot. It's the shooter shoot mentality. Confidence. Our confidence level is high."

On reaching 1,500 career points:

"Just the grind. Just the grind. I've been playing basketball for four years, so just the grind. Keep grinding."

On if they got happy when Wyoming stayed in a zone defense:

"Definitely when you see them going in to that. You saw Jordan (Schakel) got hot. We wanted to keep finding him. Matt (Mitchell) got hot. Definitely when the ball is going in, it keeps our confidence up."

Sophomore Guard Jordan Schakel

On how they found confidence in shooting after struggling in Boise:

"You can't ever let a game or shot affect you mentally. We have a lot of shooters on this team, so we're going to keep shooting the right shot."

On what Coach Dutcher's message was before the game:

"He wanted us to play with great energy and focus on the defensive end – box out and rebound. I feel like we did a pretty good job of that. We still have a ways to go from where we need to be."

On how they can build off this win:

"We just need to focus in practice, go hard in practice and keeping that same mentality when we go into practice, the next game and shootaround. We just need to keep that same mentality we had tonight."

On how this win can help them this weekend:

"I think that we can use this game as a step in the right direction and comeback these next few days in practice and keep that same energy, listen to what Coach Dutch has to say and focus. It's just all about our effort, our energy and what we can control."

On what allows them to have so much success on the boards tonight:

"I feel like Nathan (Mensah) helped a lot in that category. Maybe it was just a result of us talking about it all year that we need to box out and rebound. I also don't think they were sending as many people to the glass as other teams do."

On what was different about having Nathan Mensah in the starting lineup:

"He's a big, strong, tall and physical guy. He protected the basket very well in the first half. Whenever we'd give up a blow by, or something wasn't easy at the rim, that all adds up to the team. It's not easy when there's a 6'10 guy protecting your basket instead of wide open layups, so it helps a lot."

On how he got out of his shooting slump:

"To be honest, it's just about having the right mentality and not really worrying about makes or misses. Just taking the right shot and making it. That's really it. It's not about how many shots you miss. It's about taking the right shots and being confident in yourself. It doesn't really matter."

On having a bad taste in their mouth after Boise:

"We definitely do have a bad taste anytime we lose to one of your rivals like that. It's not what we take pride on in this program, so we definitely had a bad taste in our mouth. It's not completely out from this game. We need to build on this game and just keep taking steps in the right direction."

Wyoming Head Coach Allen Edwards**Opening statement:**

There was a commitment to zone defense. It was well against Vegas (UNLV), but Vegas wasn't a team that's capable of shooting (like) San Diego State. We understood that there were guys that were more than capable of making shots. I just don't think our urgency was there to get inside the three-point line or even just be there on the catch, which extended their lead. Regardless of what the score ended up being, I don't think that was there tonight.

In offensive strategy featuring a lot of early-shot clock shots:

We addressed that in the timeout and even at halftime. We're not coming back with one shot. We still have to be able to play our brand of basketball and the most important thing is to put together multiple stops in a row and then still move the ball from side to side and take advantage of a slip here, a bad screen there, or getting it into (Hunter) Thompson on a duck in, or whatever it might be. Some of these guys are still learning that. You just can't grab it and go play one-on-one just because the score says we're down. I don't think we did a good job of that.

On heading home after opening MW play with two road games:

We're off tomorrow due to travel and then we just have to go back in and get to the drawing board. I told our guys, at the end of the day, regardless of how it's going, you have to keep moving. You don't stand still and expect something to change. You have to continue to move through and figure things out while we're going through it.