



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State Press Conference Quotes Tuesday, December 17, 2019

#### Head coach Brian Dutcher

##### Opening statement

"We climbed five spots in the polls, so my intention is to postpone games for the next two or three weeks and we could be No. 1. We're climbing and we're not playing so that is a good thing. But seriously, after 10 days off it will be good to get back on the floor. We gave them some time off. We went two days on, one day off, so we haven't gone every day. We are getting toward the back end of finals; the guys are excited about that and we've had some good practices leading into tomorrow's game. We'll see if we can knock some of the rust off and there will be some rust."

##### On if there is a concern about having 10 days off in the middle of the season:

"Ideally if you are playing well you want to keep playing, but we knew this was coming, everyone has to take time off for finals. I like that we beat San Jose State because I wouldn't want to sit for 10 days on a loss. It's a coach's nightmare. You lose a game and you want to play right away. You don't want to sit ten days. So, the fact that we went into this undefeated was kind of a good mental break for everybody. We feel good about ourselves. We've tried to tell the team there are areas we have to get better. But that's always been the key to Aztec basketball. We get better as the year goes on. So even though we're 10-0, we have a lot of room to grow at both ends of the floor and hopefully we did some of that this last 10 days."

##### On if this team compares to the 30-win teams of the past, including the team featuring Kawhi Leonard in 2010-11:

"We've got a very good team, but to sit and think that we could go 34-3 would be amazing. That team was special obviously when you have arguably the best player in the world on the team. I don't know if we have anybody up to that caliber. We've got some very good players, but Kauai was such a difference maker. At the time Aztec fans probably sat there and thought he was a great player, but nobody would have closed their eyes and would have dreamed he was going to be arguably best player in the world."

##### On the possibility of the players getting to excited about playing in STAPLES Center:

"I hope they get excited about being in STAPLES center. College is about experiences. They'll look back and remember what we did in Las Vegas, they'll remember playing in the STAPLES Center. I don't think any of us have played there, certainly I've never been in there for a game. So we have to embrace those sort of things, be excited about it and then get focused and try to play good basketball when we get on the floor."

##### On how this game came about, on a neutral court:

"The power conference's all want to play neutral court games now. They don't want to play a lot of home and homes. So they get the boost of not playing a home game from an RPI standpoint or NET index standpoint to play a neutral site game. So it's a little higher value than a home game. Instead of running the risk in coming and playing a true road game, they play a neutral game and they still get a boost if they can win on a neutral court, like we did against Iowa and Creighton. It carries a little more value to play a game that's not on your own floor."

**On his thoughts regarding the NET index:**

"There's a lot of information that goes into it. And we're excited to have that high a ranking. It validates our scheduling a little bit, you know everybody questioned what kind of schedule we played. Out of the ten games we've played, five have either been on neutral courts or road games and then five home games. I think if you compared us to any of the team's up at the top, that's why we're so high, because we played road or neutral games. A lot of the power five schools, that are up there in the rankings, have not played that many on the road. They probably played more like seven to three home to road games or neutrals."

**On how he looks at the San Diego Christian game:**

"I told the team that I'm most concerned about how we look against ourselves, our level of play. San Diego Christian is going to put everything they have into the game, but I want to see if we're playing up to our expectations. That's not anything against San Diego Christian, but I want us to have a high bar for what we think of ourselves and to play every possession like it means something. We have to go out and compete in the high level and play the right way. If we do that, it'll be a good way to get back on the floor and get our legs underneath us and see if we have some carryover from before the break into the next portion of our schedule. So I think it's a perfect time to play them after finals and after 10 days off. I'm glad we're not playing the reverse order and playing Utah tomorrow and then having San Diego Christian on Saturday. I think it's the right order to do it and it's worked out well from a scheduling standpoint."

**On if he has seen the map that shows the undefeated teams and the amount of the country they are closest to and if it creates any pressure on the team:**

"I don't think it's pressure. I think it's just kind of fun to see. My wife shows it to me. She likes it, but she's a graphic person. She's an artist. She loves to see that map. I'm not very good geographically to know if someone else lost how much more of that map we get. I don't know where those distances are from those schools that cover that map, but it's kind of fun to see."

## Junior guard Jordan Schakel

**On how the team is doing with the break:**

"We had a nice 10-day break. We've been practicing hard, getting finals done and staying focused so we can play extremely hard in our game tomorrow which should help prepare us for our game on Saturday."

**On that now that finals are over are you able to just play and focus only on basketball:**

"Definitely. Being a student athlete is very challenging and this little break that we have, winter break, we just get to focus on basketball so I can't wait. I think a lot of guys can't wait is it is an amazing time."

**On if you feel the team is better since the start of the break:**

"I think the area we needed to get better at was rebounding and playing both defensive and offensive zones. I think that with rebounding, we can work on it every day, and it's just about us doing it when it comes game time. But as far as the zones, I think we got better and in that aspect the coaches told us what they wanted. And then we performed on the court each day in practice."

**On being a Los Angeles native and playing in STAPLES Center:**

"It is definitely going to be amazing. I played in there one time previously and I think it was for a championship, but nothing to this magnitude. But you just grow up watching the Lakers and Clippers, see games there every night and you dream of playing there. We have a great opportunity to go in there and play in an amazing venue and just take care of business."

**On now that one-third of the season is over does this team have what it takes to reach the same heights as previous SDSU teams:**

"I definitely think that those teams were amazing. We definitely look up to and take bits and pieces from what they did, but I think they were a completely different team. We just need to keep doing what we do, play how we play and at the end of the day, it'll take care of itself."

## **Junior forward Matt Mitchell**

### **On if the San Diego Christian game could be a trap game:**

"You never want to look at look past an opponent by any means. Saturday is a big game for us, but tomorrow is a big game for us as well because that's the game that's at hand and that's the one in front of us. We're just taking it one step at a time and tomorrow (San Diego Christian) is the task at hand."

### **On if being ranked means anything to the team:**

"It's flattering, but numbers don't really mean anything at this point. Everybody laces up their shoes the same way; they go out and they play basketball. I feel like if we play our basketball, we play how we know we can play; the rankings and standings will come. But at the end of the day we must be the best program we can be."

### **On if you feel the team is better since the start of the break:**

"We've grown on the defensive side as well as the offensive side. We're just trying to just work out the kinks and the nagging issues we have or that the coaching staff sees. We're working it out and just trying to get better every day. This 10-day span was good for us to get in the gym and teach and learn and just be able to break everything down, slow down a little bit and now it's time to get it get it going again."

### **On if the team was excited to play in STAPLES Center against Utah:**

"I think everybody will be excited to play in the STAPLES Center. I think that will be fun. Utah is coming in there 8-2 and they're good basketball team. I think that will be a good challenge for us heading into the rest of our conference schedule."

### **On playing against Utah which recruited him:**

"I came here because it's a family environment is close to home. These guys here are great and I wouldn't change it for the world. I wouldn't give it up and I wouldn't go back and try and change anything. But it was as far as knowing the coaching staff and players (at Utah), there are bad feelings. It's a game of basketball, so I'm just looking to lace them up and play some basketball."

### **On being a Los Angeles native and playing in STAPLES Center:**

"It will be fun to do. I've actually never played in STAPLES before, but it will definitely be something fun and a box of check off the list."

### **On if being ranked creates a sense of confidence or excitement among the players:**

"Definitely there is some excitement to it and definitely some joy but at the same time we can't get too ahead of ourselves. Twentieth in the nation and third in the NET; that's good. I'm proud of what we've done but at the same time we have to keep our heads down and keep working, keep plugging away."

### **On how hard it is to not believe what people are saying about you:**

"For me, it's not hard at all. It's just drawing the line between the two for me. It's just trying to stay humble and keep my head down keep working. And I know that these guys on the team are all the same way. We're all happy for each other to be ranked and happy for the team. But at the same time, you've got to keep your head down and keep working."

### **On now that one-third of the season is over does this team have what it takes to reach the same heights as previous SDSU teams:**

"I feel like we accomplished that. I wouldn't put it past us. We're 10-0 and we have the ability to keep winning games. And as long as we stay the course, execute our game plans, keep playing the way we have been playing and stay glued together, I definitely think that could be in our potential."

**-SDSU-**