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SDSU Men's Basketball vs. Boise State – Preview Quotes

Feb. 14, 2019

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening statement:

"Want to congratulate Stacie Terry and the women's team on a four-game win streak. They're playing good basketball right now and I'm excited for them, happy for them. I want to congratulate Jeremy Hemsley here. Top 10 scorer in San Diego State history. That's a heck of a deal. The thing that's most amazing is that Jeremy's had the 28 and 30-point performances, but you look up and he's top 10 and he's done it so quietly because he plays the right way. He's our top defensive player, one of the tops in the conference. He never forces his game, he just takes what comes and shares the ball, and when you look up he's in the top 10 in scoring in San Diego State history. It's a heck of an accomplishment and congratulations to Jeremy. Boise will present a great challenge. They might be the most unlucky team in our conference. They've had six games where it's gone to the final possession and they've lost five of them, so they put themselves in the positions to win and the ball hasn't gone in, for whatever reason. They are a very talented and well-coached team and will present great challenges to us on Saturday afternoon here in Viejas."

On Jeremy Hemsley becoming a top 10 scorer:

"Somebody asked me if we were going to give him a basketball signifying that he's in the top 10, and I said, 'Well, how high can he climb?' I don't want to give him one two weeks later for (becoming number) nine or eight, so I don't even know what is realistic, how high Jeremy can climb on that list. By the time he's done with his senior year, we will get him something to signify that, and hopefully its nine, eight, seven, whatever he can do to help us win basketball games and put points on the board. We will definitely recognize him for that."

On the emergence of Jalen McDaniels and what has helped spark that presence:

"I'm just happy he's crazy good right now. Maybe just getting more comfortable in a go-to role. Sometimes you get that thrown at you and you want it, but then you press too hard because you're the guy that we're going to. So, maybe he pressed too hard at the start, and he's getting a little bit more relaxed and comfortable in that role now. Instead of trying to get all the way to the rim, [now] he's just trying to get to his spot. He gets to 15-feet and in, and he's pretty good in there. Maybe earlier in the year, he was trying to get all the way in to the rim, and that one extra dribble can make that defense able to come over and stop you. Maybe one, two dribbles and getting to that spot where he's most comfortable has made the biggest difference, instead of pressing it all the way to the rim, in my opinion."

On what it does to have a mid-range or post player, in addition to senior guards, who can score like Jalen:

"It's made us dangerous at all three levels. Jeremy has obviously proven he can get to the rim, attack to the rim, get there any time he wants. With the emergence of Nathan (Mensah) as more of a low-post presence, able to score in there and anchor the inside, Jalen's kind of handling the mid-range responsibility, shooting the face up from the short corner, getting to the foul line, making those shots, and then Devin (Watson) plays with such great pace. He can get to his spot either for others or himself, so we are getting more dangerous offensively. Matt (Mitchell) continues to struggle a little bit but he's a very good three-point shooter and we'll add Jordan back, hopefully very soon, it will give us more three-point shooting on the perimeter and that dimension, to go along with Matt's ability to post up. We're becoming more dangerous offensively. We're becoming more confident to find each other in those spots. No matter how much the coaches believe you're good there, your teammates have to believe you're good in that spot. If they believe that, they'll get you the ball there."

On the status of Nathan Mensah and Jordan Schakel:

"I think Nathan is not going to practice much today. That's what I've been led to believe by (Associate Athletic Trainer) Sergio (Ibarra), and then Jordan is going to be limited, so he will be back on the floor. How much, I'm not sure, but it will be very limited as we try to gauge where he's at from a pain threshold and a healing threshold. Like I said, we don't want to rush him back. We aren't going to make the NCAA tournament over the next two games, win or lose. We've got to have everybody healthy for Las Vegas in the conference tournament, and we will err on the side of caution to make sure that gives us the best chance to [have] everybody healthy at the conference tournament."

On what has helped get the team on a run recently:

"Confidence. Being more comfortable on the floor, it looks like. Like Jeremy says, having fun. The fun is in winning, but you have to come out and practice every day, too. Some days, you have to make practice fun. I think they're competing at a higher level. They're concentrating harder and longer, and they're growing up as a team. That won't guarantee us wins, but it will give us a chance to win games. We're getting to the point where we are confident and we know what challenges lie ahead. We know we have the hardest part of our schedule coming up. Boise is good. We have Nevada twice. We have a return game with Utah State. UNLV is even with us in the standings, right there with us. We have a tough road to hold, so we have to continue to try to get better and not be overly confident, but believe in ourselves and believe we can continue to play at a high level."

On if the team has a specific goal for conference tournament seeding:

"Obviously we want to finish as high as we can in the standings. The minimum goal is to try to avoid the play-in games. It's hard to win four games in four days. Minimally, we want to avoid the play-in game, and that won't be easy. The conference seems pretty even from two-on down, two to the middle of the pack. I don't know how much difference there is between Utah State, Fresno State, San Diego State, UNLV, Boise (State). I mean, Boise just played Fresno. Fresno is 9-3, Boise is 6-6, and those two teams are even [in that] they played two even games. Now, in the win-loss column, Fresno is much better, but if you watch the two teams individually just play, you would say if they met again in Las Vegas, it would be a tossup. You wouldn't say either team is clearly better. I think that's every team in the conference. I don't think there's a lot of difference with the exception of Nevada, who's a top-10 team nationally. I think they're, right now, clearly better than everybody. Until someone else proves that wrong, they're the monster of the league. The rest of us—you could play anybody matchup-wise and it's going to be a game come conference tournament time."

On the balance of the conference schedule this season:

"It's definitely a factor when you miss a team that might be struggling that particular year. It's hard to tell when you come in. Some of them might be happy at the start of the year, like, 'Hey, we're only going to play Utah State one time,' and now you're saying, 'Wow, I wish that we didn't have to play them at all, because they were picked ninth, and now they're in second. I think it is what it is. We just have to play who's in front of us. We can't control our schedule unless we played everybody in a round robin. I'm not in favor of that."

At San Diego State, we have an ability to schedule outside the conference and get quality games that maybe some of the other teams in the conference don't. I'd rather play less conference games and continue to give ourselves an opportunity to schedule ourselves a good nonconference schedule."

Senior Guard Jeremy Hemsley

On becoming a top 10 scorer:

"It just snuck up on me. I didn't even know I was on the list or anywhere near the top 10, but I found out at the airport after this last game, so it was a surprise to me for sure. I don't even know who's on the list, but I'm going to try to keep climbing it, for sure."

On the emergence of Jalen McDaniels and what has helped spark that presence:

"I would just say his energy. He has a nose for the ball and just plays hard. I'll catch him at times during timeouts or during free throws—I'll see him talking to himself. If you want to be good at this game, you've got to be crazy, and Jalen is kind of crazy. You've got to be crazy if you want to be good at this game, and I think Jalen has all the tools to be good, and he wants to be good. It shows."

On if the team has a specific goal for conference tournament seeding:

"I've never really paid attention to it. I've never looked at the standings or where we are. The way I find out, is [through] what the coaches are telling us. My job is to just go out there and play, and put us in the best position to win the games. I'm just going to focus on that. I don't really look at the standings or numbers or anything like that."

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