



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State-Boise State Postgame Quotes February 16, 2019

#### San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

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

"I was great to carry a little momentum from our previous games. We won five out of six and then got this one today, six out of seven heading into Nevada. You know, I thought the building was electric. It gets better and better every game. We have the best crowd on the West Coast so when they're out here supporting us, it makes it really hard on the other team. The two senior guards that were up here were obviously instrumental to our play. Devin (Watson) got in foul trouble at the end of the first half. He's rarely in foul trouble, but he came in the second half. We didn't have a three in the first half and Devin came back in the second half and hit three really big threes for us. Boise's a very good team. They are very well-coached, but they're snake bit a little bit. They've lost some close games that they're capable of winning, so I'm sure Leon will continue to keep working with his group and I wouldn't be surprised if we saw them somewhere along the line in the conference tournament. They're very well-coached and very talented. The second half of the game was important. We got off to a great start offensively in the second half. And as much as a coach you don't want the defense to be dictated by the offense, ours somewhat was. We started scoring and then our defense picked up. Rebounding was critical. I think we outrebounded 43-25. I think that's a huge turnaround from the first game. So, we rebounded like crazy. I think we had 17 offensive rebounds. A concern moving forward, obviously, is that we're turning the ball over too much. We had 16 tonight, I think we had 15 or 16 at Colorado State. We had 15 or 16 at New Mexico. We only had nine against Utah State, but we have to take better care of the ball when we get in these close games. We can't have those kinds of turnovers and hope to keep being rewarded with victories. But, with all of that being said, I'm proud of the team, proud of the steps we're making moving forward and I'm excited for Wednesday against a very, very good Nevada team."

##### **On the difference between the first meeting and tonight's game:**

"I think it's maturity. You know, the sophomores are getting better, the freshmen were kind of not ready for that moment at Boise and they've stepped up. I mean, they've become good players and sometimes their contribution to the game is not measured in points. Aguek (Arop) is guarding like crazy. (Adam) Seiko's guarding like crazy. Now, they'll score baskets, but sometimes their contributions aren't measured by a stat sheet, and so they're both playing extremely well. Nathan (Mensah) again missed two days of practice with his back. We keep giving him treatment and he steps out and plays in the game, and I think he had ten points and [eight] rebounds and his presence was really important. We're getting contributions from everybody who's playing. We're switching up offensively, we're driving the ball more, we're spacing the floor more. So when we're running set plays into more of a free-flowing spaced offense, we're hard to guard. I think you saw Jeremy Hemsley's really tough when he gets downhill and we give him space to do it. He made some really important drives late in the second half. And then to start the second half, I didn't think we were getting the ball inside enough and we went inside the first three, four, five possessions of the second half into either Jalen (McDaniels) or Nathan and tried to establish a little bit more of an inside presence to start the second half."

##### **On what the key was to eliminating Boise State guard Derrick Alston as a three-point threat:**

"He's a very good player, and every time we ducked under a ball screen, he made us pay. He stopped behind and shot it in. I just think maybe Nathan (Mensah)'s presence at the rim made it a little harder for him to finish at the basket. You know, Jalen (McDaniels) did a good job—he took the challenge a little more personal. When a guy scores that many, and he did it mostly on Jalen and Aguek, they probably answered the

challenge a little bit more. With that being said, he's still a wonderful player. He definitely had a nice game. He had 12 points, so he still scored the ball at his average. He's a good player."

### **On rebounding:**

"We were really bad rebounding the ball earlier in the year, so we spent a lot of time working on it. Now it's at the point where we're really not working on it regularly. It's just become habit. Every time a shot goes up, I feel as if they're turning and locating a body and boxing out. We're working less on it because they're doing it on their own. They've made the transition from practice to a game. If we don't give teams second shots, it helps our chances to win the game."

### **On if the improvements with rebounding came from hard work in practice:**

"I think it's just a lot of drilling. Just a lot of hard work. Just because you work at something every day, doesn't mean it's going to happen. Sometimes it takes a lot of time and eventually, the lightbulb goes off. I feel as if I watch practice tape or game tape, when a shot goes up, everybody turns and looks to see who is coming. They've made that step forward, so if we continue to rebound like that, then we're very good defensively. I think early in the year, we were good defensively, but we gave up second chance opportunities and had to guard another 30 seconds. Now, we're only guarding for the first 30 because we're not giving a lot of second chance opportunities."

### **On if playing Aguek Arop and Nathan Mensah's increased minutes has helped the team on the floor:**

"Yeah, without question. Playing Nathan more minutes, getting him in the starting lineup, helping the rebounding. Playing AG (Aguek Arop) more — he's a very good rebounder. And then, Nolan (Narain) does a good job. Nolan comes in and Nolan is so fundamentally sound; he's always in the right place at the right time. What he may lack in being able to just jump up and get it, he's usually pretty good at boxing out and finding a way to get a hand on it."

### **On if this win boosts the team's confidence heading into Wednesday's game against Nevada:**

"I don't have to worry about getting my team ready to play Nevada, from an emotional standpoint. I could give them two days off and they'll be emotionally ready. They'll be charged up to play a ranked team in our building. Over the next 24 hours, the coaches have got to sit down and come up with a game plan that will help them win. They'll be ready to play. I'm hoping the building is going to be packed full. It should be. We've won 12 straight home conference games and we're playing pretty good basketball right now. We will face the ultimate challenge with a ranked Nevada team that's 23-1 right now. That will be a great challenge and one we're excited to take. We're ready for the step. I think if we would have played Nevada the first week of the season like Boise, we might have gotten beat by 20 or 30. I don't know if we'll win, but I think we're more prepared to play them now than we were earlier in the year. It's almost good that we're seeing them late twice, than early."

### **San Diego State Guard Devin Watson**

### **On making the three-pointer when trying to draw a foul:**

"I knew the time was running down. We got the ball back in my hands. Normally they bite for the pump fake — he bit a little bit — but not enough to draw a foul. He actually tapped my elbow a little bit, but I was able to gain control of the ball mid-air and was able to give off my normal follow through. Just held it, and it went in."

### **On what it does for the team when Jeremy Hemsley gets a chase-down block:**

"We expect it. If Germ [Jeremy Hemsley] is chasing them down, we expect that to be a block every time. Unfortunately, it got in their hands and they hit a three, but it definitely boosts us up. When they're on a fast break, were like 'dang,' but then we see Jeremy and we're like, 'okay.'"

### **On keeping the ball to shoot free throws at the end of the game:**

"I just trust myself as a free throw guy. I'm in there every day shooting free throws before practice, after practice. It's something I'm really focused on. So, at times like that, when it's a three-point game, I want to make sure those free throws are going down. I don't want to trust a turnover or something like that. And then what happened, he came down and hit a three, was it? So, imagine if we didn't hit those two free throws. It's nothing selfish or anything like that, but at the same time, we're trying to win a game."

### **On the key to getting out of double teams:**

"I'm just a little smaller than the guys on the court, so it's just all about picking my movements you know, angles and things like that. I'm lower to the ground. Those guys are standing up. They're kind of lazy on defense, especially when they're just trapping me. It's easy to get a bump on them or something like that, knowing they're trying to foul. So, it's easy to get out of those."

### **Senior Guard Jeremy Hemsley:**

#### **On if they're thinking about Nevada yet:**

"We know that's the next game, and we know the task at hand, and we know how good they are, but at this point in time I don't think we're thinking about it. We have to wait for the scout. We haven't watched much film. The focus right now is we got the win on Boise, but we know the challenge that's coming up for sure."

#### **On how important tonight's win is:**

"It's a big win. We went up there and got embarrassed, so I think we're turning a corner right now and playing together as a group. We're just having a lot of fun out there, so this is definitely a big win. Being [Devin's] teammate, we see him make shots like that all the time. Guarding him in practice, he makes tough shots all the time, so seeing it go in in a game, I don't think any of us were surprised. We knew he was going to take the shot. The shot clock was winding down. If you look, I think everyone knew. We support each other. Devin is a great player. That tough shot wasn't the first one, and it won't be the last."

#### **On what a shot like that does for a team:**

"You sort of just exhale, kind of. Especially if you go a couple of times up and down the court where you haven't made a three. That's where you just get the ball to the senior guard and just hope they make the best play for the team. That's what Devin does."

#### **On the chase-down block:**

"I think it's just an exciting play. For me personally, it just keeps me in the game, zoned in. I know have to stay locked in mentally, so I think my teammates look forward to seeing me do stuff like that – whether it's a dunk or a steal or a block – I think they're always happy for me to see me do good."

#### **On the team's blocking performance:**

"I think we're just taking it more personal on the ball. Earlier in the year, our defense just wasn't good, so I think us as a collective are just playing better on that side of the floor. It helps us on our offense, so I think everybody just knows their role and knows how hard we have to play if we want to win. It definitely starts with defense, and I think we all have that mindset."

#### **On Devin Watson keeping the ball to shoot late free throws:**

"As his teammate, we trust him to knock down those free throws. We wanted him to keep the ball so he's not intentionally holding the ball, it's just we want him to do that because we know he's going to knock down the free throws."

### **Boise State Head Coach Leon Rice**

#### **On today's game and his team's performance:**

"San Diego State, right now, is playing great at home. They're one of the hottest teams in the league right now, with the longest winning streak at home in the league. We knew it was going to be a tough game. I love the way we approached it. We came out and had too many turnovers in that first little section, then we settled down. We had seven turnovers in about the first 10 minutes, and then we only had two, three or four the rest of the game. It was a weird game because like you said, different things hurt you, even at different times throughout these games. We need to come together and regroup. We need to get back to it. The great thing is, we have the bye coming up and it's coming at a good time. These guys have put a lot into it here. They're battling, and it's a tough, tough road trip. Been on the road for about six days. I think a break right now will probably help this team."

#### **On what he's looking for in the team's upcoming bye:**

"I'm a rebounding coach. That's unacceptable to give up 17 (SDSU offensive) rebounds. Like I said, they're really, really good offensive rebounding team, but you can't give up 17. Maybe you have a great night and [give up] 10 or 12 and have a chance, but to give up 17, you have no chance."

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