



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### **SDSU Men's Basketball vs. Utah State – Preview Quotes**

**Feb. 6, 2019**

#### **San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher**

##### **Opening statement:**

"Got back to my house last night about 2:30 a.m. Three games in seven days, and gave the guys the day off today to catch up academically, rest their legs a little bit and get ready for a very good Utah State team on Saturday. They're 18-5 overall, 8-2 in the league and on a seven-game win streak. Definitely going to be a real challenge that we're excited for an opportunity to take."

##### **On the game at New Mexico:**

"Coming off the three straight wins, we thought we had an opportunity to go into New Mexico and maybe steal another road victory. Got off to the start we wanted – got an early lead, they fought back, took a one-point lead, and then we fought ahead with five minutes in the first half to have another 10 or 11-point lead. Then costly turnovers led to run-out layups, open shots, and we have to do a better job taking care of the ball down the stretch in the first half. With that being said, we had a one-point lead at halftime and again, did not come out and play the style of defense we need to play to win on the road."

##### **On Utah State:**

"Utah State is very good. They picked up a real shot-blocker that really solidifies their defense, (center Neemias) Queta, they added him two days after school started. They got on him late, he was from Portugal I believe, is 6'11", 240-pound freshman that has 60 blocked shots already on the year. I think we have 62 as a team. He makes a real difference anchoring their defense. Sam Merrill, a first team all-conference player that is continuing to come into his own. They're well-coached and they play a really good brand of basketball."

##### **On learning from the New Mexico loss:**

"I thought we competed hard. We came in and got off to a good start. We rely so much on Jeremy (Hemsley) and Devin (Watson) in those situations, you know, two senior guards to kind of carry the loads for us. They've been great all year. But, they got a little careless, I think they had nine turnovers between them, and we really have to count on them for ball security in a game like that on the road. I know they were disappointed, but they'll bounce back. They're very good players and hopefully everything is a learning experience. Learn next time they're in that situation to do a better job of taking care of the ball and putting us in positions to win a game like that."

**On if there's a reason for the large scoring margins in both the team's wins and losses:**

"I'm not sure what it is. When we get ahead, we've been able to maintain our leads at home. On the road, it's obviously tougher. That being said, in Fresno, we built a lead, they came back and took a lead, we changed leads, and that was a four-point game. So, they're not all like that, but obviously losing by [13] last night was disappointing when we felt like we had a chance to compete in there. New Mexico, again, is a different team at The Pit. Obviously they're the only team to beat Nevada this year, in The Pit. They've been up and down themselves and they played better last night and the result showed that they came out with a win."

**On Jalen McDaniels knowing what he is capable of doing:**

"Yeah, I think Jalen has gotten a lot more comfortable. He started to make some threes, but that's not what got his game going. It was getting to a spot, that 15-foot range off the dribble or off the catch, that mid-range jump-shot. Seems to be automatic. You know, 11-19 from the field last night, another big game shooting high percentage, his rebounds are up. Jalen has really picked up his game and hopefully that will continue as we head into the second half of the conference season."

**On if the team is in a position to make a run at the end of the season like last year:**

"Having to win the conference tournament [to go to NCAAs] would probably have to be said for the entire league, with maybe the exception of Nevada, although Utah State has put a strong run on right now. We're all kind of in that position in this conference. We're all trying to get our teams better, to peak at the right time, and I think we're getting better. The three game win streak, we were playing better defense, we were rebounding at a higher level, and so we can't get discouraged. We have to continue to come out and work. All there is, is the work. We have to put our work in, we have to use the time we have on the floor to try to improve ourselves without wasting legs. We've already had our two byes, so this is a long grind for these kids. As a coach, I have to be selective as to how hard I go in practice, knowing I have a game around the corner. We'll work hard to try to improve the things game-to-game that we need to, and keep their confidence up. There hasn't been a team that wins that plays without confidence. We lost a game, and we can't let that deter us or shake our mental that we believe in ourselves, we believe in this team and we're going to continue to work hard to get better."

**On Nathan Mensah needing to stay on the floor to grow through his mistakes:**

We tried to show Nathan how well he played against New Mexico the first game, I think he was 7-7 from the field. He got a lot of those same foul-line jump shots that he got in the first game and they run around the rim and didn't go in. We don't want him to lose his confidence. Obviously it's harder on a freshman on the road than it is on a veteran, so he struggled a little bit more on the road than he has at home, but Nathan continues to grow his game. He tried to take an early charge — he's so literal, I mean, he listens to everything the officials say. They told him, 'You've got to have both feet set to take that charge.' I ask him in a timeout late, 'Nathan, why aren't you trying to take any more charges?' [Nathan's response] was, 'Well the official told me this and I want to make sure I do it the right way.' He's such a great kid. Everything you say to him, you have to know that he's taking it literally, so even if an official comments to him on what he's looking for in a charge during the game, it gets late in the game and I wonder why he didn't try to take any, and it might have been just that one small comment. Nate is a great kid and he continues to learn every time he steps on the floor."

**-SDSU-**