



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### No. 4/4 San Diego State Pregame Press Conference Quotes January 27, 2020

#### San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

##### Opening Statement:

"I just want to start out by saying how proud I am of my team (for the way they handled the news of Kobe Bryant's death). (They played well through) how deeply affected they were. We all remember the generational player of our era. For me, it was Magic (Johnson) and Larry Bird, watching them resurrect the NBA, but for my team, it is Kobe Bryant. And (I'm proud of) how they dealt with that news an hour before tip. (I'm proud of) what a great job they did banding together in a really electric environment, finding a way to win a game and to break the school record with 21 straight wins. I'm just so proud of them and their effort under those circumstances."

##### On being tested by the environment in Las Vegas:

"TJ (Otzelberger) has done a good job in Vegas. They (had) won six in a row, and they're a different team than they were earlier in the year, so they were playing dynamic basketball. But the thing we don't do is, we don't make mistakes that beat us. We (only) turned the ball over six times total. We hung in there. We took advantage of the one or two miscues that UNLV made, whether it was a turnover that Malachi (Flynn) forced that led to a layup or whether it was the late run, we made timely plays, and we made important plays. That's what good teams do; that's what winning teams do."

##### On difficulties of playing in "The Pit" and preparing to play a team with injured players:

"I've been in there (The Pit, University of New Mexico's home arena) enough to know that it's so loud in there that I can't talk to my team during the game. They (New Mexico) have won 13 straight games at home and have not been beaten there this year. They are a different team at home than they are on the road."

"(UNLV) had a guy that was out for 6, 8, or 10 games and he showed up against us. New Mexico has had two players, (both) starters, that have been out for two or three games. I have no doubt they'll be ready to play against the Aztecs. So, the one thing we (always) know is we're going to see everybody's best shot. We embrace it and we prepare for it. Then we go out and hopefully execute at a level that allows us to keep this win streak going and create some separation in the standings."

#### San Diego State Senior Guard KJ Feagin

##### On his personal connection to Kobe Bryant:

"He (Kobe) meant everything. Growing up in my household, my mother was a huge Lakers fan, so he was introduced to me early on. I grew up watching them (the Lakers). I remember the playoff series against the Nuggets with the final against the (Orlando) Magic and game seven against Boston. I'm just rerunning plays back in my head right now. For the last 22 years, all I've known is Kobe Bryant. He's the GOAT (the greatest of all time) in LA. There will never be anybody like him. That's all we know in LA. He will be worshiped now. It's just a tough loss."

**On how the team will approach playing in New Mexico Wednesday, entering a hostile arena as an undefeated program:**

"We just approach it like any other game. We know we're going to get to the best effort from their team. We have to expect that we're going to play a nicely balanced team on Wednesday. We'll come prepared and we'll hope to come back with a win.

"It's an approach that we've gotten used to (knowing teams will bring their best and try to end the undefeated streak). We have the big target on our back, and I think we love having a target on our back. We're up to the occasion every game. It's going to be sold out, everything is going to be packed, so who doesn't want to play in front of a crowd like that. We live in the moment and we value each other, and we love each other."

## **San Diego State Junior Forward Matt Mitchell**

**On his personal and the team's reaction to Kobe Bryant's passing:**

"Everybody's reaction was just shock at first; not really believing it. I know myself, personally, I didn't believe it. I just kept thinking there's no way. It had to be a hoax. After the game, hearing that the news was true and to know that he did pass, it was disheartening and very sad to go through. The entire team, we all grew up looking up to Kobe. I feel like all basketball players of this generation grew up wanting to be Kobe, to play like Kobe, taking stuff from him out of his game. It's very disheartening to see him go. Prayers go out to all of the family members."

**On how the team saw success playing through emotion Sunday:**

"I feel like we have heart and we know when to lock in. We know when to keep each other grounded. Emotions were a little high and scattered before the game, but we came together as a group and (Coach Brian Dutcher) talked to us. He really calmed us down. He talked to us and said to just to talk to each other, grab each other and say, 'Let's go'. (He told us to) to just be ready for the game and try and worry about it (the news) after."

**On the team continuing its undefeated streak:**

"I'd say it's one of our goals, but at the same time we've got to take it one game at a time. You don't want to get too far ahead of yourself. You don't want to jump the gun. There're so many games left, and we need to value these games and really lock it in and take it seriously."

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