



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State Men's Basketball Press Conference

Sept. 28, 2021

Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"It's a really exciting time up here in The Mesa. The sports are doing fantastic, and we'll get our start today with official practice at Viejas Arena. The (Los Angeles) Clippers are in the JAM Center and we were over there earlier watching them. With Steve Ballmer, Jerry West and Tryronn Lue, it's like a Hall of Fame over there."

On what the Clippers can show the Aztecs while they are practicing in the JAM Center:

"Our kids aren't going to the practices, but our coaches are. And we'll have an opportunity to talk to them about what we're seeing; what the next level looks like. I think they have an idea of that, but just to let them know how hard they work up there and that hard work is everything. Talent is one thing, but if it doesn't match with hard work, it's unfulfilled potential. So, we'll talk at length about how hard the NBA works every day that they're in our building."

On if, with such a deep team, could he see using multiple starting lineups:

"Yeah, we could do that, but I'm probably more comfortable coming up with a starting lineup and sticking with it for a while, if I think it's working. And then maybe just adjust the substitution pattern. But right now, all spots are open. That's the beauty of this program, nobody's promised anything. You compete for every minute you get on the floor and that competition has been going on in our preseason (workouts) and now, in the fall season. Minutes are up for grabs, and you have to go out and claim them every day in practice."

On if there are any similar characteristics between current Aztec Matt Bradley and former Aztec Matt Mitchell:

"I think (Matt Bradley's) a scorer like Matt Mitchell was. He scores at any level: 3-point shots or mid-range jump shots over defenders or posting up. So, they share some similarities, but their games are different. Matt (Mitchell) was a little bigger, not stronger, but both possess great strength and an ability to put the ball in the basket."

On how he expects to grow sophomore guard Lamont Butler's game:

"Just experience. Lamont learned from his minutes last year. He got better as the season went on. He's used the summer to improve himself and I think we'll see an even better Lamont Butler this year. Whether it's as a starter or coming off the bench, Lamont will be ready to go this year and play at a higher level. I'm sure that."

On what he expects of senior forward Nathan Mensah and if there will be any limitations in his minutes:

"He's going 100 percent in practice, and he looks good. So, I think Nathan's ready for a breakout senior year at the offensive end. Obviously, he's always done in the defensive end, but I think he's getting more comfortable (offensively), and I think he'll put points on the board for us this year."

On after going through the off season with the recently enacted one-time transfer rule, if he learned anything he did not already know:

"We've always had success on the transfer market. This is the first year we'll have the one-time transfer. Chad Baker-Mazara is a one-time transfer who is eligible instantly. But we've had transfers eligible instantly in the past: the fifth-year guys... graduates that come in and play that extra year, and we have a couple of those, too. We've done a good job of mixing transfers with program guys. That chemistry has always seemed to work, and we have to continue to bring players in that are about the right things, that want to win beyond anything else, and are willing to sacrifice part of their games to win...so we'll see how quickly these one-time transfers pick up our schemes, what we're doing, and how hard you have to play to play at San Diego State. We'll see how quick that transition is for some of these younger guys."

On what the summer spent competing for the Ugandan National Team in AfroBasket 2021 has done for senior guard Adam Seiko's game:

"(It's) experience and confidence. You know, confidence is everything in basketball, and Adam has great confidence his game right now. Playing in that African tournament helped him. So hopefully that carries over into this season with the Aztecs."

On the only scholarship freshman on the roster, Demarshay Johnson Jr.:

Demarshay is a big strong young man. He doesn't look like a freshman. He's got size and strength about him. He moves at a really good pace on the floor, (and is a) good runner. Now it's just getting comfortable with the new system offensively and defensively. That's a hardest adjustment in going from a high school big to a college big, because in high school you're playing on eggshells. If you turn the wrong way, somebody falls. You have to be careful, but now it's more physical and I think that suits Demarshay's game. So, we're excited to have him out there and let him prove himself every day in practice."

On if having a mature team helps with the preparation for the upcoming season compared to last season where it was a struggle to just get on the court:

"The veteran team helps and having a full summer and now fall, leading into official practices help. We're a lot more competitive in practice, whereas a year ago, we were just doing individual development, if we were fortunate enough to get in the gym. Now we're already building this year's team. We're competing hard in practice, and hopefully that will continue into official practice, (but) we've not scrimmaged yet. We've played segments where we'll play a game to eight points or something like that, but we've not put 20 minutes on the clock and played a half. I'm looking forward (to that) now that we're in the fall. After we practice (for a bit), we'll probably start scrimmaging, possibly as early as next week, to see where we're at over extended periods of time."

On what concerns him most about this year's team after losing players like guard Jordan Schakel how made many important shots for the Aztecs last season:

"Yeah, that's a big loss. Jordan was an elite shooter. He made important, timely shots and we won't know if that's going happen until we play games. Obviously, we've got guys who can shoot the ball. We've recruited shooters to the program, but are they capable of making important, timely shots? We won't find that out until we start scrimmaging and play games. Once that happens, we'll have a better feel for whose hands we want to put the ball in with the game on the line."

On if he feels the team is more versatile due to the increase in overall size on the roster:

"Yeah, we have tremendous size and strength, and that will make practice a grind every day. Whether it's Nathan (Mensah) or Tahirou (Diabate), Joshua (Tomaic), Jaedon (LeDee), Demarshy (Johnson Jr.) or Kesahd (Johnson), we have a lot of size and strength out there, so it'll be a battle for those guys. If I was a guard, I wouldn't want to go down there. I'd stay out and shoot all the threes I could instead of going in the paint with those guys."

On if the team is excited by the challenge the non-conference portion of the schedule provides:

"Yeah, they want to be challenged. They want to play at an elite level, and we've had the kind of success where we have to schedule up. We have to play the best that we can play. So, whether that's going to Ann Arbor to play Michigan or going to BYU and playing them in in Provo, those are going to be hard environments. But we'll know what we have early in the season and that's what I like. We'll know where we're at, and where we're at heading into the conference (schedule) because we'll be tested in the preseason."

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