



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

“Aloha, back from Hawaii. Hoping for a better result, but the result is what it is. We played three really good teams. Good moments, some tough moments and it's November basketball, so we're going to learn from it. We're going to get ready and we're going to play a very good Irvine team tomorrow night. They're 6-1, averaging 83 points a game, giving up 58, it's going to be a real challenge. They have two really good guards in Baker and Davis. They have a seven-foot center that patrols the paint and they're playing really good basketball. So, any hangover from Hawaii has to end quickly. It has to end tomorrow at tip off and we have to be ready to play.”

On the takeaways from Hawaii:

“We're at a point where we want to win those games. And obviously we want to play up to our potential. Ohio State, we played really good basketball. They've got one loss on the year, us, and they're one spot below us in the rankings this week, I think at 25. Arizona is number four in the country right now and playing really good basketball. We shared a charter with Creighton, and they were equally as impressed with Oumar Ballo as much as anything, how good he was going against Nate Mensah, the player of the year in the Mountain West and then Ryan Kalkbrenner from Creighton, the player of the year in the Big East and Ballo had his way, so that was a good test for both of us. Arkansas, I thought we played well enough to win and just let it slip out of our fingers at the very end. That was very frustrating. I think if we were sitting here with one loss, we'd all be talking about a higher ranking and expectations would grow but, our expectations haven't changed at all. We know we have a good team, but we have to continue to get better and I think that's the trademark of our program. No matter what November is, we're going to be better in December, better in January, better in February and really good in March.”

On the delayed game slip-ups:

“It's just the human element. That's the beauty of sports, whether it's the officiating human element, a player's human element, you see it every day in every sport. Whether you're watching NFL football, or baseball or whatever the sport is, that's the beauty of sports, the human element. As much as we put them in positions to be successful, players are going to determine what that success is. Coaches get too much credit, maybe too much blame, but players, you have to put them in position to win and then they have to win the game and they have to get the credit when that happens. It's college, so as coaches, we want to take the blame, because we're teachers, this is a classroom. So, we learned a lesson and hopefully we'll grow from that lesson and be better as a result of that. It's hard to win a college basketball game. That's what I always say.”

On moving forward from the Arkansas game:

“I mean, practice has been hard. We took the next day off, spent a day in Maui and tried to let them unwind a little bit. The next day was a travel day, we didn't get back till six at night. And

then we had two good days of practice, but you can tell they're still dragging a little bit. Practice today has to be better. It's not surprising. That's a long trip. You know, I was tired from the trip. It's 72 hours straight of basketball. As much as everybody thinks we're over in Hawaii just kind of relaxing, that's a lot of basketball in three days, especially against a competition we played. So, there is going to be a hangover as far as legs getting back involved, coming down off the disappointment of loss and getting ready for the next game. That's on us as coaches to have them ready and hopefully today's practice will be better than last week. They play hard in practice, but I felt like we were driving the bus. We were really pushing them for effort and that sort of thing. Obviously, a player-led team is better, so hopefully they'll step up now that they've had a couple days to be back in town and be better from their end as far as talking and being emotionally more involved. They play hard as heck. So, I don't want to confuse that like we haven't had good practices. We've had good practices, but the coaches have been driving that so now we need the players to step up and drive themselves today leading to the game tomorrow."

On the frenzied atmosphere:

"First of all, the atmosphere there is incredible. It's great to play there. But when it turns the other way, yeah, it's a concern. So, I'm responsible for San Diego State's men's basketball team and how we act and behave. With that being said, I know that there'll be a freshman on the court and occasionally he'll do something, or they'll hear a voice in the stands and then I try to rein that in. And so, Eric Musselman is in charge of Arkansas. He has to run their program how he sees fit and answer to his athletic director and his president. So, I don't want to comment on their behavior. I just want to say that we behave in a first-class manner, that our kids are gracious in victory and defeat, and that I hopefully set that example by being the same way. I'm not too high or too low, I'm pretty steady. And I think our team reflects that. Obviously, Eric is wired tight. He competes at a high level, whether it's celebrating or it's being mad at a loss. That's his personality and his team has thrived playing for him. Everybody has a different style of how they coach their team and how they prepare, but I can only control what I do on the court and what I put out there for our team."

On the Aztecs being a better team after pushing themselves three straight nights:

"Time will tell, that's the thing. I told them, it's easy to say that we're going to use this as a springboard to get better and we're not going to lose another game, but that's all talk in a locker room after a game, but it remains to be seen. When we got off the bus I said, "What is lip service and don't pay lip service, and I think Ag said don't talk about it, be about it. It's easy to talk about it. We have to be about it. We have to practice hard. We have to get ready to compete at a higher level knowing that we're not as good as we want to be right now. But I would say 90% of the teams in the country are saying that, it's November basketball. It's not like you're returning seven guys on an NBA roster. Even with that being said, the world champs, the warriors, were struggling a week ago. It's an interesting game and dynamic to have your team play at a high level all season. I think Arizona is close right now, Purdue, those are teams that we'll see if they climb a level higher. Lookout for all of those teams, maybe they're already at peak efficiency and it might be hard to maintain that. So, it's an interesting dynamic in coaching and playing."

On Matt Bradley playing more aggressively:

"I've always said that about Matt, it's not surprising. I always knew he was going to hit that level, it's just a matter of when. And that's just timing and confidence. In basketball and any sport, we play, it's confidence. You know, I've used this analogy before, if you miss a one-foot putt, the next one you have looks two feet, and you miss that it looks seven feet. So, you see a ball go in

or a three-point shot go in and then the next one goes in, and now you're off and running. You think all of them are going to go in. So that's the fine line of confidence in basketball. I never try to micromanage because if a guy doesn't have confidence, and then you're telling him not to shoot, then what does it do for his confidence? I've always been a believer that guys know their game and if they're feeling good about it, and if they think it's going in and I have to think it's going in."

On DJ Davis:

"He went to high school with Lamont Butler, I think he played with Matt Bradley at a few AAU programs. He crosses midcourt, he might shoot the ball. He's going to shoot it at the hash. He's going to shoot it deep, and he can really shoot the ball. We cannot give this team a ton of threes. Dawson Baker's very good too. Baker's very savvy, knows how to play, get you off your feet. So, this is a dangerous team. You're not 6-1 for no reason. You don't go to Oregon to win at Oregon early in the year and not be good. And then average 83 points a game and only give up 58. It's not like they're just in a race to outscore everybody, they're playing good defense, and they're scoring. So, this is not what I wanted coming back from Maui, but this is what it is. We have to be up for the challenge."

On Russell Turner:

"He's as good a coach as there is. When we scheduled them, you always look and see what Irvine has coming back for bigs because they're known for elite bigs, and we looked, and they lost bigs. So, we said, well, let's schedule them, they got young bigs. Well, now they're guard driven, and their guards are incredible. This just shows his ability to say, I still have a good big, a freshman big, but I can win playing with guards and he's doing that. That's what the surprise is. Usually Irvine, you think of them, they're a low post team dominated inside, go in there and punish you inside. And that's not what they are at all, their perimeter base, they're shooting threes, they're sharing the ball and they're playing really good basketball. "