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San Diego State Baseball
Head Coach Mark Martinez
Virtual Press Conference Quotes
Feb. 14, 2022

Opening statement:

"We're coming off a pretty decent year, finishing 30-16. We had a very veteran group, especially on the field. I think we finished second in the country in hitting (and) somewhere in the top five in runs scored per game. We're going to have a little different look this year. It's kind of flip-flopped; we feel pretty good about our pitching staff moving into the season. It's a seasoned group based on the kind of the experiences they had last year. Overall, they didn't have a great year (in 2021), but they got their feet wet in real time. And that's translated into some good stuff, so we're going to be pretty experienced on the mound. Less experienced out on the field, probably starting one senior. The rest will be sophomores, freshmen or redshirt freshmen. So it's going to be exciting times. It's been a lot of fun working with this group; they're engaged. We're hungry to get started and hopefully play a normal schedule coming up this season. We're looking forward to the season starting this Friday against a great opponent, so we'll see how it goes. It'll be a great step in our process to get ready for this season."

On how he treats non-conference scheduling what he hopes to accomplish prior to the start of Mountain West play:

"One of the things that we're trying to do—and we were kind of on our way starting with the 2020 season—we want to try and go somewhere that's going to be difficult, you know, a regional-type atmosphere. So the thinking behind that is that you play a regional on the front end of your season, kind of get a barometer of where you are (and the) rest of the season, whether it's non-conference or not, you kind of understand where you need to be. The places that we want to continue to experience are in postseason. Like I've said all along, the next step for us is to win a regional, so we're kind of opening up in a regional-type setting. And the non-conference scheduling is challenging for sure, but that's by design. I really feel like our program has gotten to the point where, you know, we're going to go out and play just about anybody. It doesn't matter if it's here on The Mesa or on the road. But we do want to have one difficult road trip each season. In 2020, we went to Coastal Carolina and Oklahoma. We're going to continue to do that, hopefully advance our program and eventually be a top-25 program year in and year out."

On the opportunity to play on national television for the TCU game:

"What does it mean? It's (an absolute) win for our baseball program. It's an opportunity get our brand out there. (We get to) kick off the season on a national level on a big-time network. And so, I guess with the (MLB) lockout, hopefully a lot of eyeballs will be on. It's baseball, so hopefully a lot of people will (turn on) that game and watch us play. It's a great opportunity to get our baseball program and our university out there for sure."

On the opportunity to host the Mountain West baseball tournament this year:

"I've said all along, the one thing that we do great at San Diego State is that we host tournaments. We host the (NCAA) basketball (tournament), we've hosted track, all of them. And I think we do a great job here. Really, for us, baseball-wise is you have to host tournaments, you've got to win tournaments, you host the regional. That's kind of what we're preparing for in the future is that we want to be in position to host a regional. This is a great opportunity, a four-team format that's a regional-type setting. It kind of gives us a (blueprint) if we do get that opportunity in the future that we have done it before, and we've done it over a period of time. So it's kind of clean and we know how to handle it. I know our school does a great job doing that. That's why we're going to continue to bid for that tournament and

hopefully have it on The Mesa as many times as possible because I think it's going to translate to hosting a regional at some point. We've got to win; we've got to be a top-16 program to host a regional. But again, that's the plan."

On infielder Caden Miller's move to shortstop:

"Caden's done a great job transitioning from second to short, so he's going to be our shortstop to open up the season. I think he's going to pretty much anchor that. The guy's played pretty much every game since he landed here at San Diego State. He's a veteran-type guy even though it says sophomore next to his name, you know he's a COVID sophomore or whatever it might be. But he's done a really great job transitioning. He also got to do that last summer when he went out to the Coastal Plain League and played shortstop. So when he came back here this fall, we just plugged him in there, and he's done a phenomenal job for us."

On if this season seems more normal compared to the past two years, which were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic:

"Absolutely. You know, playing doubleheaders is not fun and the people in our department would definitely say they don't like (them), either. It's a long day. You can kind of look at the games we faltered in last year. They were in the back end of those doubleheaders. We just did a poor job of managing that. That's a coaching problem. But (it'll be) nice to play (three-day) series again. You get a chance to kind of catch your breath. After Friday night, whether it's a victory, a close loss or whatever, you can kind of regroup and get after it on Saturday. You can try and win a series. Then, the other part of that was we didn't play any midweek games last year. Again, trying to repair some of those things that you might have faltered on over the weekend, it's best to do that in those midweek games. You can kind of mix and match your lineup, give some younger guys some opportunities to get some at-bats or innings on the mound. We didn't have that opportunity last year packing three games in two days. We did okay; we won 30 games, but at the same time, we weren't prepared to do that very well. And that's really my fault. We did a poor job managing those doubleheaders, so it's nice to see no DHs next to our games this year. We'll see how it goes, so yeah, I'm really looking forward to the season."

On which newcomers will make an immediate impact:

"Well, at second base we have a young man, a transfer from USC, his name is Alex Rodriguez and he's wearing No. 13. But he's a dynamic infielder and is a great addition to our program. So you've got to be strong in the middle, right? At catcher, Poncho Ruiz was a freshman for us last year, appeared at DH and caught a little bit. But we're plugging him in as an everyday guy. In center field when Cole Carrigg might be catching, might be playing infield, third base, wherever it might be, we have a young freshman Irvin Weems from Las Vegas. He's a very dynamic player as well. We're really excited about those guys for sure. And on the pitching staff, you know, we have some guys back that didn't pitch a whole lot for us last year or did not pitch at all. One guy that's kind of really stepped up for us is Jadon Bercovich, a redshirt freshman. He's going to be one of those guys in the back end of our bullpen along with Robert Brodell, who's a transfer from Imperial Valley College. We've kind of built our pitching staff from the back forward, and those two guys are kind of the back end of it along with Joey Ingrassia, who threw a few innings for us last year. Those are some of the new faces who are going to step up. Then our Friday night guy is going to be a new face for sure to start the season, and that's TJ Fondtain. He was a hitter for us last year. He'll continue to hit, but he's going to be a dual player and is going to pitch for us on Friday night, starting the season. Then we'll see about Troy Melton. Hopefully, he gets healthier as we move through the spring, and we can plug him in at some point down the road. But we're looking forward to it. We have some nice young kids who are going to be playing."

On the two new assistant coaches:

"In a span of two weeks during the summer I got thunder-bolted. Joe Oliveira, who did a great job for us on the recruiting trail and obviously coaching hitters and helping us on that end, decided to change his career path. And then two weeks right after that, (pitching coach) Sam Peraza got plucked from our program and went over to Arizona State University. So I was tasked with finding some guys who can actually upgrade what we're doing. Joe and Sam kind of challenged me with that, (saying), 'Hey, you've got to get better.' And we kind of locked it up with the two guys we got, starting with Shaun Cole. You can look in his way. He's got a national championship under his belt; he ran USA baseball; he's coached in the Padres organization, and he just happened to be available. And we kind of won that bidding war. We got very lucky with that. The same thing with Sergio Brown. He was interviewing for the head coaching job at (Cal State) Fullerton while I was searching for a coach, and I really didn't start talking to Sergio until we found out he didn't get the job. We're just very, very fortunate that they both chose San Diego State. I really believe that's an upgrade not only on the field, but they also have a rich tradition of great recruiting and upgrading their programs. So I'm really excited moving forward with those two guys, absolutely."