

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

## San Diego State Aztecs

**Brian Dutcher**

**Trey Pulliam**

**Adam Seiko**

**Matt Bradley**

Postgame Press Conference

San Diego State - 53, Fresno State - 46

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We welcome San Diego State to the podium. We'll begin with opening comments for our head coach. We'll then ask questions of our student-athletes, we'll dismiss them, and then we'll finish up with questions for the coach.

So, Brian, would you please have your opening statement?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, if you like late night basketball and defense, this was your game. It was a struggle to score. And I thought we pressed too hard in the first half, trying to score on the first side of the floor. Obviously, we know Justin Hutson is a great defensive coach. He's the one that set our defense at San Diego State as an assistant. So we know every time we play him what it's going to be like.

I thought we got a little better movement in the second half offensively. Opened some things up. Honestly, we play high level defense. I thought the job Nathan Mensah and Aguek Arop did on Orlando was about as good as you can do, because he still scores, even if you play good defense. And we got it out, a hard-fought victory and excited to have an opportunity to play again tomorrow night.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We have questions for our student-athletes. We have Adam Seiko, Matt Bradley and Trey Pulliam.

**Q. Adam and Trey, I want to ask you the same question. Can you just explain how important senior experience was tonight in this tough Mountain West**



**game where Fresno had you in a close game throughout, and just how you stayed composed and conducted leadership throughout game?**

ADAM SEIKO: Yeah, it's great to have the seniors we do on our team, with Trey and Josh and AG and Nate. You know, guys who have won championships here. So they know what it takes to win a championship here. We know that March is a tough time. It's no time for excuses, no time to rest. This is the time you got to turn up your game.

So we just try and lead by example, lead by our voice, every day we can in practice. And, you know, we just want to lead by example. And we did that today.

TREY PULLIAM: Like Adam said, we've been here winning championships before. We know how to stay composed late games, how to take care of the ball now. We've been in many situations where we haven't dealt well with the press and stuff like that, but that's just where our senior leadership comes in. We just know how to stay composed.

THE MODERATOR: Okay.

**Q. For Matt, I know you've seen the PAC 12, their tournament is here, too. But tomorrow night there will be four teams in action. All four probably turning into tournament teams. Can you talk about how deep this conference is, what you've seen from it, and then what tomorrow night's going to be like with the all the great teams in action?**

MATT BRADLEY: You know, before this tournament started, I said I think this is going to be the best tournament going on in Vegas right now. We're extremely deep. There was great competition in the PAC 12, but it's really deep in this conference. And to my surprise, it's been a battle every game, you know, top to bottom. So I'm really impressed and we got a big one tomorrow. So I think we're going to get it handled.

**Q. Matt, I had a question for you. It looks like Fresno State was doubling you up inside a lot, especially during the first half, a little bit into the second half.**



**Was this different from how Fresno was defending you in earlier games or was it somewhat similar to their previous approaches?**

MATT BRADLEY: You know, I think going into this game, you kind of have this mindset of, me personally, we can't lose. Single elimination. And I was pressing a little bit too hard the first half, not making good reads. Kind of playing, you know, outside of my game. But, you know, they played me tough, constantly to the way they did the first time at their house.

But I think the difference there was I was making correct reads and, you know, made it easier for my teams teammates. And I think in the second half, it started to show that. You know, I was playing better off the ball and stuff.

So, yeah, they played me tough. And hat's off to them, they're a great defensive team.

**Q. Trey, I'll ask you. Can you just tell us how difficult it is to face a team three times within three weeks and the familiarity you get with one another?**

TREY PULLIAM: It's definitely difficult. Especially to beat them all three times, that's hard to do. And especially, we just played them, I want to say, two or three games ago. And it was a battle, overtime win. We knew what it was coming in. We just had to make a few more plays than them, and we did.

**Q. Adam, what's it like to play in a game where it seems like even buckets, like in the first five minutes of the game, are vitally important because it was, like, 10-10 with eight minutes left or something like that?**

ADAM SEIKO: Yeah, we knew what it was going to be with Fresno State. They play defense just like us. They know all our plays. So we're really playing after the play. And we got off to a little bit of a sluggish start in the beginning. But it's all about adjustments and all about our coaches making the right adjustments throughout the game. And that's how the game went.

As long as we get stops on the defensive end, we knew our offense would come. In the second half, our offense came through and our defense even rise even better. It was good to get in the rhythm the second half.

**Q. Matt, earlier this week you said that you thought Nathan Mensah should be the MVP of the league. Can you just talk about what he did down the stretch there against Orlando the last five minutes of the game?**

MATT BRADLEY: Yeah, you know, Nate, whether things are going for him or not, there's no expression changed on his face. Orlando was playing a great game the first 35 minutes. And, actually, the whole 40. But when they did -- you know, to stop them, if that didn't happen, you know, they definitely could have won the game.

So if Nate doesn't have it on offense, he's going to give it all on defense. And he's just a great teammate. He was never discouraged and he fought through it all. So definitely needed him this game.

BRIAN DUTCHER: I'll just say about Orlando, you know, how good he is when we're celebrating the fact that he had 25 and 11, when you say we did a good job on him. That's how dangerous he is. So he's a wonderful player. The points he got, I thought we made it really hard on him to get. So that's what we wanted to do, make it difficult.

**Q. I guess I'll open this question up for the three of you, really. This question kind of affects all three of you. It seemed like it was quite the pro-San Diego State crowd out there today. How much of a morale booster is that, just being on the court and knowing that your fans are going to be traveling and rooting for you no matter where you go?**

ADAM SEIKO: That's what I was going to mention at the end of the interview if no one asked that question. We love our fans so much and they show us so much support. Not just here, but really everywhere we go on the road.

And so, to have them here and have a majority of just crowd in red and black, it was good to see them and they just cheered us on and they kept the energy high all game. They just see us going.

We love our fans. And if you're watching this, we love y'all so much and we can't wait for tomorrow.

TREY PULLIAM: You said it for me.

MATT BRADLEY: Yeah, I second that.

THE MODERATOR: Do we have any more questions for our student -- okay.

**Q. What are your initial thoughts when you know you have Colorado State tomorrow night?**

MATT BRADLEY: I know it's going to be a battle. You know, they got to play the year on the team. They just had a big win tonight. So, you know, we battle with them every game.

At home, even though it was a big win, it was a battle. And at their house, you know, we made a big comeback and lost the game, sadly. But we know what's ahead. We know we got to really lock in and play better offensively than we did tonight.

Defensively, you know, we bring it every game. So, yeah, I think we're looking forward to it.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. One last question for the athletes.

**Q. For anyone who wants to answer this, was it almost weird for your bodies to have five days between games? I can't remember the last time you had five days. And does it take a little while to get sort of ramped up into this game?**

ADAM SEIKO: You know, like we always say, it doesn't matter how many games we play in how many days, we don't make excuses over here. And also shout out to our training staff and Sergio and Justin, keeping us healthy, giving us the right food and drinks in order to keep our bodies healthy.

Like he said, this is not a time to make excuses. It's the time for everybody to step their game up. So we also do a good job of keeping our bodies well after practice recovering. And so we're always prepared. So we're always prepared in the mind and body. So it was -- it's okay. We don't really care about five games in how many days.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We thank you, gentlemen. And you'll be dismissed and we'll now take questions for our head coach.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

BRIAN DUTCHER: You know, the first game, they threw it in and they didn't move a lot, so we were able to double off the ball and scramble. Then the second game, they had cutters and they had cutters again this game.

So it's hard to double. They're moving hard. They made big-time adjustments. So we tried to pick and choose who we would go off and try to double them occasionally.

But at the end of the day, AG and Nate did a good job. They didn't let him get to his right hand. The shots he made were really difficult. I mean, he was three for three from the three-point range.

And they ran plays down the stretch for him to shoot threes, the seven-footer. So that's hard to deal with. And

so they're well coached and he's a really good player.

But like I said, we fought hard for everything we did to try to limit him and he still was 50 percent from the field, three for three from three. So he's a gifted player. But with that said, I thought we did a good job on him.

**Q. I have to imagine you think the four teams that are playing tomorrow night belong in the NCAA Tournament. You've been around the league a long time. Do you remember it this good, and what do you think tomorrow night is going to be like with all those four teams in action?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I mean, we had -- the one year we had maybe five teams, I think, when BYU was in the league and we had a lot of teams in the league. Call that year, and that was special. And this is close. I mean, this is close.

I don't think anyone would have been surprised if Utah State won today in a one-possession game or UNLV in a one-possession game, or Fresno beat us in a one possession, two-possession game. That's how close it is.

So these teams are at the top for a reason. They win close games. And that's what's happened. The four teams left have won close games all year. That's why they were in the positions they were, and that's why all four will probably end up in the NCAA Tournament.

**Q. Dutch, you touched down a little bit, obviously, the first half was a struggle for both teams from an offensive standpoint. What was the mindset and the approach there at halftime as you guys were able to ramp it up and had that 33-point explosion there in the second half?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Just move the ball more. You know, like Matt said, he was pressing too hard. He got the ball and they were tilting the defense for him. And instead of just getting off it and getting it back, he tried to press his game a little bit. And that's what we wanted him to do. He's our go-to player, so he has to press his game at times.

But I thought he did a better job the second half, when he pressed, when he attacked, the space we gave him to do so.

So it was just moving the ball a little bit more, not trying to attack first sight quite as much against a really good defense.

**Q. Hey, Coach. Fresno opened up the second half by**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**taking a few more open three-point shots. Did you want Fresno to start taking more three-point shots or you wanted to try to drive them more towards the inside and they just happened to find some shots on the outside?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Well, I mean, we -- it's like anything else, it's all statistical. I mean, we're giving the bad shooters threes, and the good shooters we're not trying to give them anything. So sometimes guys step up and make threes. And they hit a little to their credit. But I thought he did a good job contesting a lot of threes. I think we held -- if they had five threes for the game, that's pretty the good. That's pretty good defense. So that we'll win for you.

**Q. You put in Chad late in the game to take key free-throws. Will that be a theme going forward?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: If Chad doesn't get a technical foul, he'll play more. He gets a technical foul every other game. But, you know, he's -- Chad is -- he's pure excitement. He knows how to play. He knows how to create his shot. He knows how to move, he knows where his teammates are. He is a gifted, gifted offensive player.

So he's going to be valuable. He can come in and give us a spark like Adam did tonight. They were the key to the offense, off the bench. But he grows defensively. He's getting better defensively. And that's the key to him playing more.

If we take him out offense/defense, at the end of the game, we got Seiko in on offense and bring him in on offense. Because that's kind of what we were doing down the stretch, because Adam's a little bit more reliable defender.

**Q. Is there an injury update on Lamont? Was he banged up on that play?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: They checked his nose. I guess he got hit after the layup when he came down, got hit in the nose. So Sergio was prodding around in there with his finger. So he didn't say it was broken. So I'm sure we'll check him out and see how it is later today -- later tonight.

**Q. What does preparing look like over these next 22 hours?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Just rest our bodies. You know, there's only so much you can do on a one-day prep. So we'll let the kids sleep. The coaches will get together tonight and tomorrow morning, set a game plan as to what we think will work and then make adjustments as we go.

**Q. Colorado State had the most rest of anybody**

**coming into this tournament. And just from the looks from it, some of the stuff they ran today, it looked like they were running a bunch of new plays. How do you prepare for that when you have just a 24-hour prep? I mean, it's not just a play that you played before, but it's a team that's running new stuff.**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, I mean at their place, we weren't going to switch a lot of the stuff. We ended up switching everything because we were getting stuck on screens. So we'll just adjust as the game goes on.

Our fundamentals are our fundamentals. So we'll take away three-point shots from the good shooters. We'll try to double Roddy where we can, and just try to be solid defensively.

THE MODERATOR: Do we have any final questions for the coach? Okay. Thank you.

BRIAN DUTCHER: Thank you so much, everybody.



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## Fresno State Bulldogs

**Justin Hutson**

**Orlando Robinson**

Postgame Press Conference



And, yeah, I mean, we fought. So, I mean, we gave it all we had and that's all I want from my teammates. As long as we fought as hard as we could, I value things like that. So thank you.

**Q. Orlando, obviously, there's a chance you can play more basketball here, but, I mean, if that was it, can you take us through a timeline, what comes next for you as far as this decision coming back or leaving?**

ORLANDO ROBINSON: I tell you, well, I haven't really made my mind up yet. So I'll take it one step at a time, take what's in front of me. Play these last games with my team that I have. And then when the time comes for me to make that decision, I'm sure you'll know.

**Q. I mean, Orlando, what would factor into your decision-making, whether you stay with Fresno State or you go on to play pro?**

ORLANDO ROBINSON: They're not dropping it, are they?

JUSTIN HUTSON: Yeah. Just say you'll talk about that later.

ORLANDO ROBINSON: I'll talk about that later in the -- you'll know when you know, you know?

**Q. Orlando, Nate, that says the Mountain West defensive player of the year. Is he the hardest defender you've faced, and what is it about him that makes -- I mean, you still had 25 points, but a lot of them were tough shots. What makes it so hard to go against him?**

ORLANDO ROBINSON: He's a competitor. And as a competitor, he's going to fight. And when he sees another competitor like myself, he's going to take that as a challenge. He's very quick with his feet and hands, stuff like that. So he didn't make it easy for me. He made my touches a lot harder than they usually are, so hat's off to him as a defensive player.

THE MODERATOR: Any last questions for Orlando here?

San Diego State - 53, Fresno State - 46

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Now taking the podium, we have Fresno State with Coach Justin Hutson and the player, No. 10, Orlando Robinson.

Let's go ahead with the coach's opening statement.

JUSTIN HUTSON: A hard-fought game tonight. Proud of -- very appreciative of our kids' effort all year long and their camaraderie and how hard they played and how hard they worked. I think everybody saw that.

You know, disappointed we couldn't make more baskets. Couldn't move the ball a little better against a great defensive team like that. The ball has to move better. Easy to say, harder to do.

So give San Diego State credit, a very well coached team, really good team. And we were up for the challenge tonight, but we just couldn't finish it.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Questions for Orlando?

**Q. Orlando, you're a Vegas guy. Your thoughts here, obviously, not the result that you wanted. But if this is your last opportunity to play as a student-athlete at Fresno State, are you happy with the way that you guys were able to grind it out in a tough Mountain West game in the Mountain West Tournament against a quality team?**

ORLANDO ROBINSON: I would say that the -- the competitiveness that we had as a team, I enjoyed. I wish we could have done it further. We could have pushed this thing a lot if there. But the fight that me and my teammates shared out there on the court, that's something I value as a player.



**Q. You said during the beginning of the season that you needed some skills to perfect. You said your three-point shooting, your body, perimeter defense. A lot of other things. I mean, do you believe that you have grown this season so far to make it to the next level and really do some damage up there?**

ORLANDO ROBINSON: Tremendously. I mean, just talking with my coaches and watching film, I found out ways that I can help my team win, which is on the three-point line and making good decisions in the post and on the perimeter.

So this entire season, I've been trying to perfect that so that we can be a contending team in the tournament, and I think I did a good job at that.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you, Orlando. We'll dismiss you and finish up with questions for Justin.

**Q. You talked about moving the ball. But I think you had -- 20 of your first 27 points were in the paint and you finished with 22. Was that you guys or more them, their defense?**

JUSTIN HUTSON: I thought it was -- you know, it's going to always be a little bit of both, Rob, to tell you the truth. You know, you got to move the ball against a good team like that.

It's a thin line. It's like what Dust just said. I mean, you want -- some of your players are going to have to be aggressive and make plays. You know, and it's a thin line when I'm going to kick it out and move it, when am I going to take that hard shot. Because there was a lot of hard shots going on in both ends tonight. There wasn't a lot of easy looks going on in both ends.

So we're just proud of our guys and we kept fighting. But the points in the paint, some of them came in transition. We had a couple sets where we cut to the basket. But we knew that wasn't going to be there all night long. We're going to have to make some perimeter shots against them eventually.

THE MODERATOR: Okay.

**Q. It seems like, you know, when you play a game the night before and it's an overtime game and a tough game, is that stretch there in the second half, you know, for maybe eight minutes to four minutes or ten minutes to two minutes, is that when the legs really hit and you can see the fresh legs on the other side?**

JUSTIN HUTSON: You know, I don't know. It's something you'll talk about. You know, as a coach, you got to think about everything.

But, you know, we were ready. You know, it was the second game. I think you start getting -- the third and the fourth game is going to be tough. But we were definitely a little sluggish last night. I know that for sure.

And you talk to the guys, but you don't want to talk to them before the game and say, Hey, are you tired, and start putting that in their head.

But now that the tournament is over, we'll sit and talk about how they were feeling. Because we definitely had a few guys that had been shooting the ball very well but couldn't make one.

THE MODERATOR: Okay.

**Q. Justin, the question was directed at Orlando. I'll toss it at you. Obviously, there's a possibility your season can continue. Your thoughts, in general, regarding a possibility of NIT or a continued postseason past the Mountain West tournament?**

JUSTIN HUTSON: I think it'll be great for our guys. I mean, it's -- if you look at the Mountain West, you win with men and older teams. I think that team had nine seniors out there again.

Now, you can reload. Hat's off to them with going to get Matt Bradley and stuff. So you can definitely reload. And we don't have a senior. For those guys to go play in postseason, there's a lot of positives that go into it as following in as -- if we can keep our core to come back. We need at least seven, eight, nine guys coming back in today's portal world. And if they can get rewarded a little bit with postseason and say they did that, it would be great for them.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Over here.

**Q. Coach, I know you wanted to be part of it tomorrow, but four teams that are playing tomorrow night, I have to assume you think all four deserve NCAA bids. I want to get your opinion on that. And also, just what's it say about the league to have four teams like that playing on a Friday night in Vegas and the league moving forward?**

JUSTIN HUTSON: I've been in this league 16 years. I've been there when we had five teams in. And, you know, I think this has been the toughest. It's been one through 12 or 11. You know, I think we've had some top 10 teams



before where we were a little top-heavy with one or two teams at the top.

But, you know, we have been telling everybody -- I think every coach in this conference has been saying the same thing, It's a dogfight every night.

And we had our chances to be one of those four teams also during the course of this and it just didn't happen. And that's the lesson we have to learn. And I'm going to be rooting for the Mountain West from here on out.

THE MODERATOR: Any final questions for our coach? Okay. We thank you.

JUSTIN HUTSON: Thank you.

