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San Diego State Men's Basketball Press Conference
November 3, 2023

Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"Well, honestly, I'm getting anxious. The season's right around the corner. So that's a good thing. I want these guys on edge as we begin another journey against a good (Cal State) Fullerton team: 20 wins last year, returning three starters, dynamic guards, a veteran big and they're going to present problems for us. And that's the beauty of the game. We prepare for everyone like it's the most important game in the world. And that's what we'll do with Fullerton. We'll treat them like we're playing the Los Angeles Lakers. So, we will be ready to go and I'm excited to see what this year's team looks like."

On the exhibition game vs Cal State San Marcos:

"I liked how we played. I thought we were anxious, and I expected that. We probably shot the ball too quick. Everybody took the first shot they had, and we know over the course of the season, that's not going to work out very well. So, it's getting them to play with confidence. But with some brain power about them where the first look is not always the best look."

On the team's poor performance vs Fullerton (2022):

"I watched the game, and I was surprised how far we got ahead. I think it might have been really early in the year and obviously they went on to have a fantastic season. And so, they're hard to play. They attack the paint off the bounce. They're very aggressive. They draw a lot of fouls, and so it'll be a challenge for a young team to step out there and see how they respond. The veterans I'm not worried about, but the new guys' first game against an aggressive driving team...we'll see if we're able to stay out of foul trouble."

On the upcoming season:

"We want expectations. Last year's success we're grateful we had it, but we want expectations. I don't want to come into this year and say we're not going to be as good. I want to believe we're going to be better. And if I don't believe that, how do we have a chance? So, I like expectations. I like to put expectations on the team, and we'll see how the season goes. Obviously, nothing's ever smooth. So hopefully we will get off to a good start. But whether we do or not, I have a group of players that I know are going to get better every day and it will be very competitive."

On the loss of Aguek Arop, Nathan Mensah and Keshad Johnson:

"You don't make up for that experience. So now it's Miles Byrd, Elijah Sanders, Demarshay Johnson (Jr.) – all guys that have been in the program. They're going to actually get some game minutes. And so, there's a learning curve. I remember when Arop and Mensah were young, we'd keep them after practice, because they weren't ready to go. They needed extra time. And

I've got good veteran players. I've got four returners that I trust and now the young guys want to be good. They will be good, but how sharp is that learning curve? That's what I'm anxious to see."

On Demarshay Johnson and Miles Heide:

"I like them both. I liked the fact that Heide finished around the basket well, and did a better job rebounding, Demarshay as well (vs. Cal State San Marcos). Very good competitors and they both provide different things for different games. This is a program where you're not promised anything. Whoever's playing the better basketball at that time, will get those minutes."

On commemorating Final Four participation in the JAM Center:

"Oh, I want a great big banner up here (in the JAM Center). It's going to go right here above us as soon as we get it in. So yeah, I like to sell the accomplishments. I want them to look up there and know they're good; know how good we can be...and see that every day."

On Final Four banner unveiling in Viejas:

"That's going to be great, and we're either going to play well and they're going to say it's because of the banners. Or we're going to play poorly and they're going to say it's because of the banners, but as long as they don't say it's because of the coaching, we're going to be fine."

Senior Guard Lamont Butler

On raising the banners on Monday night:

"I'm really excited to know it will be packed with a bunch of fans. It's going to be great to see our hard work paid off. Finally get to see the banners raised up there. That's what we came here to do, raise banners and win championships."

On having a bigger target on their backs this year:

"I feel like it has been like that for the past couple of years. We have always had a target on our back. It's just going to be even bigger now since we went on the national stage. We will be ready; the guys will be ready. This will be fun for us."

On how things change with Darrion Trammell out for the game:

"It changes a lot. Darrion is a big factor for our team. We will miss him. He's another point guard out there, another scorer for us so we will have to be able to fill that void. I'm going to do my best to do my part. Everybody just has to add in a little extra now."

On his exhibition performance against Cal State San Marcos:

"Definitely just trying to get guys involved. Trying to feel things out. Cal State San Marcos is a good team. I was kind of saving a little bit for this game, I didn't want to do too much. But it will be full force once the season starts."

On what he tells the young and new guys as they approach a tough non-conference schedule:

"Be ready. Have fun, live in the moment. There's going to be pressure but it's not really pressure. We do this every day, it's things we have done for years now, it's just basketball at the end of the day. So, I try to keep that in their mind."

On how long it takes to build team chemistry:

"It definitely takes time. I feel like we've already started that chemistry throughout this whole summer, throughout the whole fall. We've been hanging out and stuff like that. As the season goes on, we will continue to get more connected."

On if fans need to be patient with their performance for the first month:

"Not everything's going to be perfect all the time. Even if we do start great, there are so many things that we can get better at. I feel like there will be less patience because the expectations are so high. I definitely feel like everyone should be patient. We are going to be a really good team. It's just going to take time. We will get more connected as the season goes on."

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