



## **SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS**

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**San Diego State Men's Basketball Press Conference**  
**December 20, 2023**

### **Head Coach Brian Dutcher**

#### **Opening Statement:**

"Well, we came off a tune-up game against Saint Katherine. I thought it went pretty good. I am still not certain of Darrion [Trammell] or Jay Pal's status. I know Jay Pal had some X-rays and he's going to go see another doctor for his nose at one o'clock. And Darrion, we'll see with him. He'll be at the arena when I get over there (for practice today) and see what his status is. I'd like to have them both. But like I said, I won't know until probably later today and maybe even game time tomorrow. We're excited to play Stanford. They'll be a real test for us. They're experienced. The starting point guard [Jared] Bynum...graduate student, Michael Jones...graduate student, Spencer Jones...fifth year, Brandon Angel...senior, [James] Keefe...graduate student, [Maxime] Raynaud...junior. It's a veteran team. Usually, veteran teams are hard to play against. They played a lot of basketball. They're big, they're strong. They haven't had the record they want but they've played a very challenging schedule. They're like most teams, all they're trying to do is get better every day. So, I'm interested to see how we fare tomorrow against a really tested and strong Stanford team."

#### **On Stanford's senior forward Brandon Angel:**

"I liked him back when he was at Torrey Pines [High School]. I know he had narrowed his list, I think, to two or three Pac-12 schools. He's an elite shooter. He's a very good playmaker and now as he's gotten more experience, he's more than a shooter. He can do a lot of things and I'm sure he'll be excited to get home and play a game in San Diego in front of family and friends. And we got to do our best to try to slow him down."

#### **On the importance of Darrion Trammell and Jay Pal in the substitution patterns:**

"Jay Pal has come in and played with great instincts the last couple of games. He's gotten offensive rebounds and has a knack for knowing when to cut and how to play. He's gotten better as the season has gone on and that's what you'd expect for a new guy in the program. Darrion I'm sure is reluctantly in the second unit. He was a starter last year and because of his injuries, because of the shoulder and missing three and a half weeks of practice, he lost his starting spot. I hate to do it that way. I'd like to maybe hope down the road he'll fight his way back into that lineup, but he's done a good job embracing a role I'm sure he doesn't want, which is being the first guard off the bench. He brings a dynamic to the game. He's a scorer. He makes other players better. And he has great experience with a fifth year of college basketball."

#### **On Reese Waters' transfer and adjusting to a new program's expectations:**

"He's come in and scored the ball at a high level. Obviously, there was a couple games stretch in there, Grand Canyon, and then maybe UCSD where he struggled to score...like most players. Then he came back last night [against Saint Katherine] and

seemed like he got back into rhythm and got his confidence back up. Offense is so much about confidence. You know, every time he's shooting and believing it's going in and finding his opportunities. I thought Reese did a good job yesterday. Both scoring within the offense and then playing on his own when he had space. Then, defensively he's getting better because he knows that's what we do in this program. We have to rely on our defense to be the kind of team we want to be, and he's gotten better defensively since he's joined the program."

**On what the team needs to improve on:**

"We have to be a better rebounding team if we're going to be competing for a Mountain West title and be the team we want to be. We have to rebound the ball at both ends of the floor. Defensively we have to box out, pursue the ball and not give teams second chance opportunities. I told them in the locker room before the [Saint Katherine] game, "If I had a timeout before every play in the game, I couldn't draw enough plays to win a game." We have to find second-chance opportunities. We have to get loose balls and rebounds. We have to force turnovers. We have to do things that lead to baskets outside of the offense and we have to find a better job of doing that and offensive rebounds are a big part of that."

**On Jay Pal's injury and the idea of wearing a mask:**

"Cade [Alger] broke his nose and he was out a while. He got a mask, he banged [his nose] again, and they wanted to wait till it healed. I think it all depends on the break and to a degree how much pain you're willing to deal with when you're playing because if you get hit, whether you have a mask or not, it's going to hurt. We'll see how quickly we can get a mask made for him: a custom one. Obviously, they have temporaries you can throw on, but it's way better playing with a mask custom-made for you to fit the shape of your nose. So, we'll see what that is when I get over there today."

**On playing after injuries:**

"I've watched Boise [State] play this year and [Tyson] Degenhart has played in a mask almost all year. So, he suffered a broken nose at some point and Cade's got one. As much as it's physical around the basket you're surprised more players don't end up with broken noses. I don't think they're intentionally happening, but there's a lot of elbows and contact around the basket— heads clashing. We'll see, this is our second one if Jay Pal truly has a broken nose that we've had this year."

**On what it takes to be an 'elite rebounder':**

"It's like anything else in basketball, there's skill and technique to it. Sometimes you are wrestling with the other guy who is strong and you're spending all your time with your hands down and the ball is up. We're working hard to try to find ways to free our hands up. Hit early, free your hands, get a little push, get your hands free where you can get the ball. Then we're trying to box out and you're trying to teach them: you've got to box out but if the guy doesn't come you can't stand with your back to the basket for 'X' amount of time you have to check and if he doesn't come then you have to just turn and go get [the rebound]. So there's technique involved and it's a skill that you recruit too. You can recruit great rebounders and we've done that in the past. LeDee is a great rebounder, he's instinctual, but we have to have guys that aren't instinctual to try to get in better form and technique-wise and that's what we're doing every day."

**On Miles Byrd's progression this year:**

"I think Miles is getting better because he's finally getting game minutes. There's practice and there's game minutes. I think the more comfortable he gets with game minutes, the better it'll be. He didn't practice a whole lot for two or three weeks with his hip. And you know, the more you get reps the better you get. You have to practice in order to play and the more practice he gets, the more games he plays, the better he'll get."

**On Stanford's record this year:**

"As much as they've got great players, they have a new point guard and I think he'll [Jared Bynum] make the difference. As he gets more comfortable and gets more acclimated to the guys he's playing with, I think he makes them better. I think he gives them their greatest chance to win. You always want to play your best all year, but sometimes that doesn't happen. I think they'll get better as the season goes on because of the way they're coached, and they have a good point guard that runs the team. I think they'll get better as they get more experienced together."

**On the importance of the game vs. Stanford over the game vs. Gonzaga:**

"Metrically, for NET rankings and KenPom and all that, this is the more important game. For Gonzaga, if you go there and get beat there, it's going to be "Well, that's a hard place to play. They're ranked high." You know, as much as it's winning the big game, it's trying not to suffer a tough loss. At the end of the year, if Stanford ends up as a Quad 3 instead of a Quad 2 or if they can sneak up to a Quad 1, but it's hard with what they've done in the preseason to climb that high, especially with the Pac-12 struggling right now. So metrically, every game is important. Probably a home game is more important than a road game."

**On scheduling games vs. tough opponents at the end of the non-conference season:**

"I just thought any opportunity to play Gonzaga I wanted to take, and they're going to come back here a year from now. We got a home-and-home out of it. It's hard to get in college basketball good home-and-home anymore, everyone wants to play neutral. To get them home-and-home, I would have played them anytime they wanted to play."

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