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San Diego State-Bradley Postgame Quotes

SDSU Head Coach Brian Dutcher

On the football team's bowl game selection:

"First of all, congratulations to Rocky Long and Aztec Football for making the Armed Forces Bowl. All you can control is what you can control. So I know the Aztecs will be ready to play and represent this university, like they have over the last number of years, with excellence and quality play. And if I can win three more games and go 10-2, I'll have the same record Rocky has. So I've got to win three in a row somehow."

On initial thoughts on today's game:

"I'm happy with our performance tonight. Fifth game in 11 days, that's always a challenge. You get better in practice, so we haven't had a lot of practice time. We've been playing a lot of games, but I thought our kids competed at a high level today. They came out and worked hard on the glass. This is a good rebounding team and we out-rebounded them by 20. We shot a pretty good percentage. Our defense was great, I think they shot 32 percent for the game, so we defended well. We rebounded well and that usually leads to a good outcome. By doing those two things we can overcome a sluggish offensive performance, from a turnover perspective. We turned the ball over 16 times again, which is way too many. Our charge as coaches is to use this next period of time, one game over the next 20 days, to get better in practice and to improve the offense and the flow of our team. Sometimes when the play is done, we're not flowing. We kind of get stuck with the ball and we have got to do a lot better job. We're going to use these next two weeks to our advantage as we get ready for Cal on Saturday and then a 12-day break leading into the Gonzaga game. I'm pleased with the team and where we are right now, but we have to get better if we're going to compete in a very good Mountain West Conference."

On his comfort with the combinations on the court:

"I think everybody that's played for us has done a good job. Our bench is deep and our bench actually played really well in the first half to help build on a lead that the starters got for us. The bench has been immeasurably important. Montaque (Gill-Caesar) was good today. Jalen McDaniels obviously was sensational, he had a double-double. Jordan Schakel just guarded well, he couldn't get his threes to fall. Nolan Narain had another solid game. It's a luxury to be able to go to a deep bench and actually increase the lead and increase your level of play. That's what we've been able to do this year, the bench has been great for me. As we wait for Max Montana to get his rhythm back and get healthy and for Trey Kell to get back on the floor, the bench has been immeasurably important."

On updates on Trey Kell and Max Montana:

"Max is ready to play and it was almost unfair to put him in. He wants to get playing, so I put him in in the first half and he hadn't practiced in two and a half weeks, so he had no real game rhythm. Even though I liked the shots he took, they didn't go in. But it's unfair to miss that much practice, only to get back for one practice and be thrown in the game and think your timing is going to be there. So I'm going to use this next week to really get his timing back and get him on the practice floor where he's feeling good about himself, because we have to have him good if we're going to be as good as we want to be. He's got to be healthy and playing. And Trey Kell, again, has basically been shooting in a boot most of the week. He tried to warm up again in case we needed him and wasn't going to dress for the game, but I told him I wanted him dressed and on the exercise bike. He asked me, 'In what circumstances would I play?' And I said, 'If we get a guard fouled out or injured, or if I need an emotional boost to the team, or if I need you to make a play down the stretch.' None of those things happened today, so I let him sit the game, which was great for me. He needs the rest and I need him healthy going into Cal next week."

On if it was Trey's decision or his decision whether or not to play:

"He lets me know if he can play or not. I know he's tough, so I know he wouldn't refuse me if I said, 'I want you to be ready to go in case I need you.' And he just asked what that circumstance would be. Mentally, as a player, you want to be ready for that circumstance. If I had Jeremy or Devin in foul trouble or one of them sprained an ankle themselves and went out, maybe his mind would start turning: 'I've got to get myself ready.' I think for part of the first half he was on the exercise bike, just keeping loose just in case. But when we built the lead and maintained it, I wasn't going to risk it at that point to put him out there. He's close, but he's not 100 percent. It's a luxury for me to have such a good bench where I didn't have to put him out there."

On details of Trey's injury:

"It's been one week because he sprained it against Washington State one week ago today. So I don't think it's abnormal. The swelling has gone down, he's rehabbing it with Sergio (Ibarra), and it's getting better. I think if this was for the conference championship tonight and we had to tape him up into a cast, then he would've played. But for a preseason game, there's no sense to run that risk with him because the win wouldn't have been more important than his health. He's close, he's very close. I think he was just actually disappointed after he warmed up. In his mind, he thought he would play today."

On Montaque Gill-Caesar:

"He's letting the game come to him. At USD he had some good looks, he got four shots up in the first half and I think all but one of them was a good look. The second half he ended up driving in there, getting fouled, and making two free throws. Montaque was injured part of the preseason camp, I think he had a concussion and he had something else that kept him out 14 to 28 practices. So it's tough for him to fight his way in there. He's the 11th man in a 10-man rotation. But when Trey went down and Max went down and he's been practicing, he's starting to show us what he can do. He's earned some minutes. As he continues to play well, he'll continue to play. The hard thing is, I told him at the start of the year, I've got 11 guys and I'm not playing 11 players. I'll feel bad for you if you're number 10 and 11 and you're not getting the minutes because you're good enough to play, but that's just college basketball. I have 11 because if I get two guys hurt, I have enough guys to win. So the guys I've had out there have won us games."

On how high Montaque's ceiling is:

"It's always hard coming off the bench. If you sit, he doesn't get in the first 10 minutes and you put him in and expect him to be 100 miles an hour. Sometimes that's a harder role because when you're a gifted player like him, you're used to starting and being ready to go from the start, but off the bench you've got to get your rhythm in the game first before you start upping the ball. So I thought he did a good job of moving the ball and sharing the ball until he got his rhythm, and then he got offensive and he did a good job for us."

On the team's physicality:

"They had a certain degree of toughness and the fact is that they played a game Friday night in Peoria, busted up to Chicago the next morning, flew across the country and played a 3:00 in the afternoon game. So we knew that would be to our advantage. That's a tough deal for anybody, traveling across time zones and playing an afternoon game. So were we tougher at stretches today? Yes, but some of that might've had to do with their tough travel schedule and a day and a half of prep traveling across country. And I think the toughness may have been most reflected maybe in the rebounds. They're a good rebounding team and I think we out-rebounded them by 21, so that's a big number for us. Both of us play good, hard defense. When we got the lead, everything free flows easier. The shots are easier because you're not playing a two-point game. Playing with the lead is definitely a lot easier than playing from behind when everything is measured so much more."

On sloppiness and turnovers:

"We're not running very well right now. Our fast break is not very good. It's not moving quick enough, the ball screens are too labored. So we have to get our fast break going again where our free throw is a little better and we're faster up the floor with the ball. We're not getting the ball up the floor on the pass quick enough, so that's something I already know we have to work on. Once the set play's over, we have to be able to flow from the set play to offense where once the play's over and we pass the ball, that guy stands there and he doesn't know what to do. He's got to play confident, so whether it's a hand-off or do another ball screen, we have to give him more options. So some of that is on the coaches, where the play's over and they get the ball and if they don't know what to do with it and they're not attacking, then that's on us. So we have to open it up for them a little bit more, where they're more comfortable after the set play's done with what they can do with the ball and what we want from them."

On not having practice:

"You can't lose a game by over-practicing in the stretch. We know we have a lot of work to do, but the games are so important that we don't want to be on the floor three hours trying to fix ourselves right now when we need fresh legs for a game. We've gotten by with what we have, but we know we have to get better. I already told them in the locker room after the game that this next two or three weeks is going to dictate our season. How much we can improve and what we're doing in that period of time will dictate how good we're going to be."

On other conference teams:

"I'm always looking at the conference because I want the conference to do well. I felt horrible for (UNLV head coach) Marvin Menzies. He had a chance to knock off Arizona and then earlier in the week he had possession against Northern Iowa and he wins both of those and we're talking about an at-large bid for UNLV. I like the fact that Boise beat Oregon and Colorado State beat Colorado. So the conference is better this year. What that will mean, we have some opportunities to still win some good non-conference games and build a conference resume. Because once the conference starts, if our RPI's are all strong then there will be room to improve during the conference. So I think the conference has done a good job. And we've got two opportunities. We've got Cal and Gonzaga at home, so we can make some hay if we're playing well."

SDSU Senior Forward Malik Pope

On his limited play time in the first half and if he was making up for the time he did not play:

"I tried to do what I could in the second half to make up for lost time, do what I can to help the team so, I mean yeah. For the most part."

On playing 5 games in 11 days and coaches keeping players focused:

"Every opportunity the coaches could, when they need to at least. I mean for the most part we were all dialed in and well aware that, you know, 5 games in 11 days can be pretty tough on our bodies, but we found a way to push through like tonight, and you know, stay strong."

On Jalen McDaniels:

"I got nothing but high hopes and high expectations for this guy right here. I mean, he showed tonight his capabilities, and that just the smallest piece of it. He has a lot of potential and, you know, as far as I'm concerned he can do just about everything out there. I'm excited for him and for this team."

On Devin Watson's performance:

"He's an energizer bunny. He definitely likes to keep the tempo going and you know, he has that loud voice that's added, so that's definitely a benefit. Don't get his hype confused because he's a loud guy, he brings a lot of energy and I love having him there."

On his dunk in the second half:

"I had to make up for that. I should've gone two hands the second time because the first one, they didn't give me the call, but hey, I'll take it. It was a great pass by Jeremy (Hemsley), great set up."

On what the team did well today:

"Playing together. For the most part, the game is runs and you know they had very few today and that was a big part of us staying as one on the defensive end. So I'm proud of us defensively. We got a lot of stops and got out in transition, and it paid dividends for us."

SDSU Freshman Forward Jalen McDaniels

On making up for Pope's absence:

"Yeah, he went down so I felt like I had to step up on my part and just play with a lot of energy and be active. I feel like I did that."

On play time in his first eligible season:

"I really don't get too frustrated, I just cheer (Malik) on, cheer my teammates on and if I get in, I just try to do what I can to help us win."

On his biggest improvement since last season:

"I would probably say just getting to my spots and making my shots that I take – open shots, three-pointers, and rebounding too."

On if the team is using its size to its advantage:

"Yeah, and I feel like we have been using our quickness to get around guys, so I feel like that helps a lot too."

On being blocked out:

"I just use my quickness to try and get around them, and it just works. I just go hard to the glass. It just works."

Bradley Head Coach Brian Wardle

On missing early shots:

"You play on the road and you have to make shots early. You don't necessarily tell your players that, but it's a fact. When you play at a place like this, in this environment against a really good team, you've got to make those shots early and get some confidence. But that's not it. We got out-toughed. I mean, they pounded us on the glass. They beat us to 50-50 balls. They were physical with us and we did not like it, and we did not respond the right way. We responded with fouling instead of responding with playing tough and playing without fouling."

On whether the early deficit was attributed to his team's shooting or SDSU's defense:

"I liked some of the jump shots we got, but we shot too many. And we got nothing inside unfortunately. Their size bothered us inside. Their physicality inside bothered our front line, and we've got to get better there."

On the inability to carry over their first-half run into the second half:

"We had bad starts to both halves. The starting five I switched up in the second half with guys who I thought were competing a lot better in the first and they jumped on us. We didn't come out in the second half and play very well either. Give them a lot of credit. They're good. They're big, they're long. They're physical and they play physical without fouling. It's what we're trying to get to. We have to get a lot tougher and a lot better."

Bradley Junior Forward Luuk Van Bree

On SDSU's defensive performance:

"I think they just did what they do, that's their identity. They rebounded, they got in position to play defense, but it's on us. We have to come out faster and we have to take them out of that a little bit. We kind of let them play their game and we have to establish our own. We have to play Bradley basketball and establish our control of the game. I think we couldn't do that today."

On Bradley's shooting performance:

"We actually had some good shots at the start of the game that we just didn't make. So I don't know, but they're a good defensive team. We have to give them credit there. I think we're a better offensive team than we showed today. I think we have to keep developing and get to a point where we can play against defenses like theirs."

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