



SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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San Diego State-CSUN Postgame Quotes January 1, 2019

San Diego State Head Coach Brian Dutcher

Opening Statement:

"I'll just want to start out by saying that you don't win that game unless you're on your home court with the great support of the Aztec fans. I mean, they were incredible. They've seen a lot of high-quality basketball, and when we're not playing well, I know they're disappointed, but the one thing they never do is give up on their team. They hung in there with us, and when we got some momentum, they kept the momentum going. They kept the heat on the other team at the end of the game. They spurred their team on to a hard-fought victory. It's going to seem odd that I say this — I thought we played well offensively the first half. I demanded they share the ball. We had two practices to do that after playing against Brown where I thought we didn't move the ball enough. As a coach, we were turning down shots to get other guys shots, and they weren't going in. We could not make a three the first half, but they were all the shots I wanted created, and to my teams' credit, in the second half when the threes weren't going, we went inside. We're not just shooting threes. We went inside to Jalen [McDaniels]. We went inside to Matt [Mitchell], and they produced in there. We played inside-out the second half, and then eventually we got enough rhythm where [Adam] Seiko and [Jeremy] Hemsley and [Devin] Watson started making some timely threes. We didn't lose our confidence enough when they presented themselves that we stepped up and made some really important three-point shots. Nineteen points behind in the second half — once again, the team showed its grit. After losing the way we did the last time we were on the floor, 19 down in the second half you'd be looking at some level, 'Are they going to give in? Are they going to get beat by 30?' They didn't do it. They bowed their back. They fought through frustration. They believed in themselves, and they came out with a hard-fought victory."

On what he told the team at halftime:

"I said I liked the way they played at the offensive end, and I said I liked a lot of the things they did defensively. We gave up some offensive rebounds like we've been prone to do at the end of the half, but I thought we played really hard defensively. The tendency for young kids is to get frustrated when the ball doesn't go in, and I thought we did a good job of saying even though the shots aren't falling, we're not going to give in at the defensive end. I thought we were gritty and just fought every possession at the defensive end. Now we gave up some second chance shots and we got some stops, and that's something that's continued to plague us, but we rebounded down the stretch. When they missed, we got some big defensive rebounds and we just hung in there. Defensively, they shot 20-something percent the second half, so we fought through it on the defensive end, and that was everybody. Nathan Mensah came in and did a great job on Lamine [Diane] of staying in front of him. He took pride in that. [Adam] Seiko came in and did a great job. Jeremy [Hemsley] is always great. [Aguek] Arop came in. Everybody I brought in off the bench just fought nail-and-tooth. I've got a deep roster. As these freshmen continue to get this kind of experience and get better, it will mold the future of this basketball team."

On what this win means for the team going forward:

"You're always as good as your last game. After Brown, we were pretty down. We were not a very good team, and then today, you have to say, 'wow look at how hard our team fought to come back.' Did they play a perfect game? No. Did they share the ball? Absolutely. Did they get timely stops when they needed them? Yes. They believe in the coaching staff, and they believe in our message. They're trying to please their head coach, which is me, and that makes me enormously proud of them. I told them, if you play the right way, you may not be rewarded at that moment, but in the long run, if you continue to do the right things and play the right way you will be rewarded. I thought they hung in there and tried to please

me and play the right way, and in the end, they were rewarded. You can play the right way and not win, but we played the right way the whole game."

On how he felt going into halftime down to CSUN:

"As a coach, you feel bad for them, because they're playing the way you want them to play and they're missing shots, they're getting frustrated and so I felt bad for them because they tried to please me. At some level I think they have to stick with it. They can't give in. They can't all of a sudden say, 'Well, were moving and kicking the ball and they're missing shots, I might as well take a shot.' They didn't do that. They continued to share the ball and play the right way, so I'm proud they stuck with the game plan. Even down 19, there was no panic in them. They just tried to get stop after stop and put the ball where I wanted it, whether it was to Jalen [McDaniels] down low or to Matt [Mitchell] down low. When you miss that many threes, you just can't keep taking them. You have to put it inside. I thought we put it inside in a timely manner and changed the rhythm of the game up."

On Jalen McDaniels' performance:

"I told him it was his best performance of the year. It was his pace. Jalen is a high motor, so he's usually going fast, but the difference was he was able to go slow to fast today, he'd come down the floor, he'd slow up just enough to stop the defense and then he'd explode by. He did a better job of ducking into the post — catching it deeper. Instead of catching it six feet off, we were running plays and dumping it in to him, and he's catching it right in the paint. He did a great job growing his game, learning his game and playing the right way. Jalen had a spectacular game today."

On calling more timeouts the second half:

"I didn't want them to lose confidence. I wanted to say, 'You're playing great, just hang in there. Don't give in.' It wasn't anything X and O or saying we're going to do this. Obviously, there was a play called out of a timeout, but it was don't give in. Keep guarding. Keep playing the right way. Keep fighting the right way. The tendency sometimes when it's not going well is to break off on your own and maybe take a defensive possession off. I think the bench helped. We gave up a fast-break basket, and we went right to the bench and got some fresh legs in. I think we played more guys than them. We had fresher legs down the stretch when the game was on the line. I just think the bench was really important for us today."

On Jeremy Hemsley and Devin Watson's impact today:

"I told Jeremy at halftime — you know Jeremy was down on himself, but Jeremy made some of those turnovers the first half making plays that I wanted him to make. He was driving in there. He was right at the rim trying to throw passes all over the place. It looked like his confidence was down. I said 'Jeremy, don't get your confidence down. I believe in you 100 percent. Play your game. Just move onto the next play. I believe in you. I'm not frustrated in you. Devin — when you're leading scorer is one-for-seven or one-for-eight or one-for-nine at halftime, it's hard to have any kind of lead. He's our leading scorer, so he has to put it in the basket. It took him awhile to get into the rhythm of the game, so when he started making shots obviously, we started playing better. He's our leading scorer on the season, so when he started making shots, I think everyone's getting more excited about our opportunity."

On inconsistencies and team growth:

"I agree [it was] inconsistent, but it's a wildly young team, so you're going to get youthful mistakes. I look out at times and half two or three freshmen and two sophomores out there, and they're young. Every time that they can do things the right way and be rewarded for it, it can hopefully get them to continue to do things the right way and be mentally engaged for longer periods of time. I think some of the inconsistency is due to youth. We're a program. We're not a one-year team. The message has always been delivered to play the right way, and whether you're rewarded one game or this year, or whether you're rewarded a year from now, just do things the right way. That's why we've had the program we have because we always try to do things the right way."

On freshman forward Nathan Mensah and his defensive presence today:

"I think he knew (CSUN redshirt freshman forward) Lamine (Diane), the best player on the other team, he knew him. He had gone up against him, so I think he was confident in his ability to stay in front of him, move his feet and guard him. Nathan was very excited after the game about his defensive effort. I think we could all see that. He was spectacular. I had him on the best player on the other team the entire second half when he was in there, so he stepped up to the challenge. Good players make good shots, so Lamine made some wonderful shots. He's a hard player to guard. For the most part, Nathan did a really good job of staying in front of him, moving his feet and contesting shots."

On the home crowd at Viejas Arena:

"This is the greatest home crowd in the state of California. Between Gonzaga, Arizona and San Diego State, those are the ones that draw. You can get 19 down, and if you get any kind of spurt at all, this crowd will get behind you. They've seen a lot of good basketball here, so when we're not playing well, I understand their disappointment, but they never give up on the team. If we show them that we're willing to fight – we may miss shots, but if they see us fighting, they get behind us and it makes all the difference in the world having them here and supporting their Aztecs."

On how the nonconference schedule has prepared the team heading into conference play this weekend:

"We've seen just about everything. We've seen comebacks, we've seen where we've shot the ball extremely well. Teams have shown us what our deficiencies are. We knew we had to get better defensively. We have to rebound the ball better. Obviously when we share the ball, we're a very good offensive team. We've learned a lot of lessons along the way, and obviously we've made mistakes as not only players, but as coaches. Things you think will work, and you throw them out there, and as hard as you try to make them work, they don't work sometimes. We start shortening the playbook. We start finding out what we're good at. We narrow things down and do the things we're really good at, and I think we're getting closer to that."

Senior Guard Devin Watson**On how he kept his confidence with a cold start from the field:**

"I'm never going to lose my confidence. My teammates believe in me, the coaches believe in me, and in the end, it worked out. We got momentum and we came out with the dub."

On how they held CSUN off at the end:

"Just momentum in the game. Momentum. We started locking up, we started getting stops. When you start getting stops, the other team gets timid. They had the lead, they see we're getting momentum and we're getting stops, so I think that was in our favor."

On sophomore forward Jalen McDaniels:

"Jalen played excellent today. He played within himself, he know his game. All the shots he took, we believed in him and he made them. He had 13 rebounds. He had a great game."

On the struggles in the first half:

"I just feel like we found our flow. We were just looking for that flow. Basketball is 40 minutes, and I knew we weren't down too much to where we couldn't come back. Once we found that flow, I think that's when we got it going."

On how he was feeling at halftime:

"Obviously it's not a good feeling, but we knew if we picked it up a little bit on defense, and soon as we found our rhythm and our flow, that at any point, the game could change. I feel like we did that in the second half and we just kept going from there."

On the ups and downs with the team's shooting towards the end of nonconference play:

"Shooters shoot. It's a 50/50 chance the ball is going to go in. The ball is not going to go in [every night] and it's all about rhythm and confidence, and I feel like we gained our confidence in the second half."

Senior Guard Jeremy Hemsley**On the message at halftime:**

"The coaches didn't come in worried; that's what they said. They said they're not worried and to just keep doing what we were doing because we were defending well in the first half, it's just that the shots weren't falling. They told us to stay aggressive on defense and the shots will eventually fall, and that's what happened."

On what helped the second-half run:

"Just seeing shots go in. That's a momentum-changer when you see shots go in, or see your teammates make a shot, or making a big play — I think we just did a good job of just staying the course and not taking plays off."

On how he was feeling at halftime:

"You try not to do too much thinking. You've still got a whole other half, so that's basically two games in one. When you come in after the first half and it wasn't the way you wanted it to go, you pretty much are just looking forward to the second half and looking forward to the things you can change and do better. That's what we did. We weren't really dwelling on the slow start that we had; we were just looking forward to what we could do better in the next half."

On if they ever get to a point where they are just tired of being down against some of these nonconference opponents:

"Of course you don't want to be down and you don't want those big runs, but it's up to the guys on the court. We can't look at anybody else to help us, or save us, or just give us that motivation. It's up to us. I don't think we are really upset about it, we're more upset with ourselves. We've just got to be better. I think we did a good job. Sometimes you come out to a slow start and it's up to you how you respond the second half, and I think we did a good job responding."

On heading into conference play:

"Me being a senior, conference is a whole other season. It's a whole different type of feel, a whole different type of style. I think we've played a lot of good teams in nonconference, so I think we will go into conference confident and knowing the mistakes that we've made in nonconference, the things that we've got to get better and the things that we are good at."

CSUN Head Coach Mark Gottfried

On the atmosphere of today's game:

"We've gone on the road a ton of times, but we haven't really played in an atmosphere like this. It's a good learning experience for our guys."

On defensive performance:

"Their size hurt us a little bit. They went big and I think when they went big, it probably hurt us a little bit. I thought we could take advantage of them offensively with a smaller lineup ... I think the other thing that hurt us was foul trouble. Lamine (Diane) was in foul trouble, Darius (Brown II) was in foul trouble. I think those guys started to play just a little tentative because of their fouls, and it probably affected our defense just a little bit."

On San Diego State:

"They have shown at times, you go back and watch their games, we kind of said this is a 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' type team we're playing against. They've been really, really good at times and then they've struggled at times. I thought in about the last 10 minutes, they kind of got into us a little bit more, they defended us a little bit harder. But you have to give them a lot of credit."

On what SDSU did well in the final 10 minutes:

"I think in the last 10 minutes they got into us a little bit more. They defended us a little bit harder. But we have to give them a lot of credit."

On CSUN's development this season:

"I think we're getting better. I think we're gaining some respect. I think when people look around right now, they're looking at us maybe a little differently than they have in the past and that's a good thing. We just got to make sure we're going to play every night, play hard and get better, and we've got a lot of young guys. You know, you look out there at all the first-year players, even though we've been on the road, the crowd got going a little bit today—a little bit of an atmosphere for them—and we probably didn't handle that nearly as well as we should have."

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