

# Southwest Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Lahaina, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

## USC Trojans

## Coach Eric Musselman

## Ezra Ausar

## Chad Baker-Mazara

### Postgame Press Conference

USC 83, Seton Hall 81

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Super proud of the effort. In the first half we were discombobulated with their physicality. Offensively a lack of rhythm. We were really fortunate that Rodney Rice got hot during that stretch in the first half, and then halftime had to make an adjustment on who was playing the point guard position. I thought we did a phenomenal job. It was a really good second half for us, obviously.

And then coming into the game we felt the theme or the story of the game was going to be the battle of the boards. We doubled them up on O-boards and won the battle of the glass by 14 against a really physical team. So super pleased with our defensive effort on the defensive backboards.

**Q. Ezra, have you ever shot that many free throws in a game? And how were you getting to the line so often?**

EZRA AUSAR: I've probably shot more, honestly. Just continued to get my repetitions in at the free-throw line and take my time, so I'm grateful for myself.

**Q. Both players, if you guys could talk about getting to the final here. It seemed like you were really pleased after the final whistle. How important is it to get this far? I know the job is not done, but two games, two wins; how important is it to do that here?**

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: It's very important because it shows what type of team we are. We're tough. We like to play hard. We played two very hard games. So I feel like we prepared, Coach prepared us for this moment. I feel like we've been responding the way we have.



**Q. Can you tell us what Rodney's injury is and how he is?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I mean, we won't know right now probably until we get back home. But he injured his shoulder, and we'll see how he feels in the morning. It's the shoulder that he injured earlier in training camp. So didn't feel the need to put him in until he could get further evaluated.

**Q. What would it mean for you to take a Maui championship? You were here with Arkansas a few years ago and played some very good games here. How about this year with this team?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I mean, when you come to this tournament, it's like you've got to get one win and then can you figure out a way to get two, and now we're potentially in a position to win three. It would mean a lot.

Getting to the finals means something as well, but to win tomorrow, we have two Big Ten games coming up when we get out of here, and the biggest concern, quite frankly, was coming to Maui and not playing well and then knowing that we had two Big Ten games to follow this up with the travel back home and all that type of stuff.

Super happy. We're learning on the fly. We're playing guys at different positions. We're running sets that we hadn't -- we had a whole playbook today that we hadn't even really run before, but we were able to walk through some stuff.

Our middle pick-and-roll was really good tonight, and I thought our first half running our normal stuff was not good against Seton Hall.

**Q. Will you explain your next three hours, what you plan on doing? Do you guys have assistance? Do you divide up scouts, offense and defense? Do you divide up scouts by team? How are you going to watch WAZZU-ASU?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, for sure we divide it up during the regular season because of the time amongst games, Todd Lee is preparing us for the other teams, sets. Michael Musselman is doing the personnel, and Anthony



Ruta is watching the defense of the opposing team to try to figure out when we have back to back to backs we divide it up.

So today was Coach Earl Boykin's prep. I thought he did a great job. I don't even know who's got these two teams. I was only worried about today.

Whenever we leave here, we'll go back and we'll eat, we'll have a five to seven-minute film session before we eat, another five to seven-minute film session after we eat and then before dinner a five to seven-minute film session and then we'll do a walk-through tonight and then we'll do a walk-through in the morning.

**Q. If indeed you play ASU, tell me about either your time at ASU when you were an assistant or coaching against a Bobby Hurley team, or what you know about the Sun Devils now?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Well, the good thing is Bobby and I aren't going to play one-on-one because I know who would win that game. The part about Arizona State, I loved being there. My family loved being there. It's a great place to live. It's a great school. I respect how Coach Hurley has put together his basketball team. To find a guy like their off guard that's -- where did he come from? Then he comes out and he really contributes.

They're a team that plays like their coach. They take on his personality. So for us, it's just watching this game, evaluating this game, then trying to come up with a game plan.

**Q. I looked at my watch, 18 and a half hours from now you're going to be back out there. You went over the schedule, but how tough is it to get right back out there in a game that's so big?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I mean, I hope -- you want to try to recruit toughness because some legs are going to be a little bit -- you're not going to be fresh like if you had five days off.

This is hard as it gets to play three games in three days, and because of the time change, we're playing games super early instead of playing the games at 4:00 in the afternoon.

So to play at 9:30 or whatever we're playing at tomorrow, we've got to get up and figure out what time are we getting them up is the first problem, and then how much do you really eat if you let them sleep a little bit longer.

So all those things are things that I haven't decided, but we

will in the next hour or so.

**Q. You mentioned a little while ago about getting ready for Big Ten play after this, and I believe last year was that first run-through of the Big Ten for USC. Do you guys feel like -- do you mentally think of yourselves like we are Big Ten now? I ask because you're going up against one of the old Pac-12s and yourselves a former Pac-12.**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Do I feel like? Not really. I feel like the Big Ten is a lot of non-conference games because we play teams once. I know it's not the politically correct answer, but we're going to play Purdue at our home building this year and that's it. It's a large conference. I feel like we're in a conference with UCLA and Washington and Oregon because we play them twice.

But when you have such an unbalanced schedule and our travel is the way it is, all I think of is how do we survive the next game. That's my philosophy once we get to conference play is just the next game in front of us.

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