

# Southwest Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 26, 2025

Lahaina, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

## USC Trojans

## Coach Eric Musselman

## Jaden Brownell

## Chad Baker-Mazara

### Postgame Press Conference

USC 88, Arizona State 75

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Just three games in three days, and the fact that we knew Aljah Arenas was out, and then to find out Rodney was going to be out, just the resiliency of our team and to be able to control time of having a lead is something super important to us and something our staff really looks at, and to control the game for 30 minutes tonight or have a lead, I thought there's a point in the game when Arizona State usually figures out a way to kind of get some separation.

I thought every time they got close, especially as the game continued to progress, that we got defensive stops when we needed to.

Then we knew with Rodney being out that somebody had to step up, and obviously Jaden did that for us tonight.

**Q. Chad, Rodney goes down and you take on a new role. What was it like? What was your mindset switch that kind of brought you into this moment?**

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: Our first two preseason games we actually didn't have Rodney. We already played a couple of games without him, and Coach just grabbed me and said, I'm going to need you to step it up a little bit more.

Not just me, he told everybody. But I would say it wasn't just me who went out there, it was all five of us obviously out there competing.

**Q. Chad, what was it like for you when you first learned that you'd be coming back to Maui for a second straight year when you came to SC and how does it feel now to be winning this event again?**



ERIC MUSSELMAN: That's the only way we got him. As soon as we told him we were going to Maui, he said, I commit.

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: No, it was funny, when Coach told me that we was going to Maui, I literally asked him and Ruta, has anybody won it back to back. He told me no, and I actually did (indiscernible.) (Laughing.)

**Q. Chad, I saw you with your parents right there after the TV interview, and you were talking to somebody live it seemed like. What was it like with your parents and who were you talking to if you don't mind?**

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: So who I was on the phone with was my grandfather. He couldn't come because he's a little sick but I told him granddad, I got you, I'm going to get you this trophy. Being able to have my parents here is incredible. We're from all over the other side of the world, so being able to have them here makes it a little bit more special.

**Q. Jaden, you were asked to take on and step in and you went to work early on. What was your mindset? What were you seeing on the floor getting you going?**

JADEN BROWNELL: Yeah, me and my dad got a saying. It's if you're on, shoot. If you're off, shoot until you're on. It was his birthday today, so...

My teammates trusted me. My coach trusted me. I work on that shot every day, and they trust me enough to be able to take that shot. Shout-out to my teammates.

**Q. Chad, you're the first two-time winner. Nobody can ever duplicate that. Or you're the first guy. How improbable is that, man, that you're here with a great team last year, maybe a better team this year, and you win it, this year you're MVP? What are the feelings?**

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: You want me to be honest how I feel right now? Ain't nobody could tell me nothing right now. But no, how do I say, thanks to the guys, the coaching staff for putting us in position to be able to become successful.



But I really feel amazing right now. I'm going to be honest, I'm on the island, got our job done. Coach is proud of us, family is proud of us, so I feel on top of the world right now.

**Q. Can you talk about how important this tournament is, winning three games in three days here, for the rest of the season?**

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: It's very important, especially because they were all dog fights. Today was probably our biggest win, and still, it wasn't until the last, like, minute or two minutes.

That tells me that we have a bunch of dogs that are ready to fight, and no matter if we played today, yesterday or right now, if there's a game tomorrow or later on, I know they're going to show up. That really helps us when it comes to conference play and the tournament and stuff like that.

**Q. You kind of answered this question, but three games in three days, ASU said they kind of lost some gas at the end. How did you guys prepare and keep up your energy? It didn't slow you guys down at all doing three games in three days.**

CHAD BAKER-MAZARA: To be honest, it's just who wants it more at the end of the day. We're all tired. We're all fatigued. We're all hurting. But at the end of the day, it's who wants it more. Me and the guys, Coach just kept being in our ears like come on, last gasp, last gasp, leave it all right now, promise it's going to be worth it.

We listened to the coach and followed his game plan, and we came out with the victory.

**Q. Coach, pretty hard-fought few days. Now that it's all over, I know you've got to absorb it a little bit, you want to enjoy it a little bit, but kind of knowing coaches' mindset you're moving on to the next thing. Was there anything that was confirmed by this week about your team and/or surprised you that you feel you can build on from this point on?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I just think with so many new players on our roster, you know, just the belief that they have. Like we have some guys that's -- when you coach a team, as a coach you're always mentally thinking about positives, things that could go wrong.

Right now we're building, like, a super confident mentality, and I do want the guys to -- we're not flying out right now. We're going to be here until tonight. I want them to go back to the hotel and have some fun on the beach and relax. I'll probably give them two days off, which we don't

do two days very often.

Then we do have to turn the page and get ready for Oregon on the road because we've got to fly there on Tuesday, and then we've got to get ready for Washington, and then we go right back to non-conference play.

But yeah, I think we're building confidence. Regardless of who's playing, when this roster was built, Alijah Arenas and Rodney Rice were our two go-to players and our two point guards, to be honest, so just the ability to make adjustments amongst the players has been very, very impressive.

**Q. We talked about this the other day, but the importance of this tournament, but to win it, how important is that for you guys going forward?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I just told the team, when they have some downtime in the next 48 hours, check out who's won this thing and look at what they've gone on to do. Because the history of this tournament is incredible.

Again, we've got to enjoy it tonight, which we will, but we do have two really tough conference games coming up, and when you hit six in a row or seven in a row, you've got to guard yourself about feeling good, and you've got to have, like, some grittiness and some desperation, which we'll need on the road at Oregon.

**Q. Three former Pac-12 teams here; what was it like playing Arizona State today?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: You know, I mean, it's unique because I actually -- my first job in college basketball was at Arizona State, so for me, the trainer, John Anderson, is a really good friend of our family's, and John is still there, and Doug Tammara is running their sports information department. He's a really good friend of mine.

But I think it's cool to play -- it's kind of a built-in rivalry with our fan bases, and it's super cool that there was three teams here representing the old Pac-12.

But all three games were dog fights, which is a credit to the committee of getting these type of caliber teams.

**Q. Bobby admitted that they looked at Brownell pretty hard in the transfer portal. Will you give me a good story on what convinced Jaden to come to USC?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: The beach.

**Q. You've been to Tempe Town Lake; what do you mean?**



ERIC MUSSELMAN: No, honestly, we have a couple guys that -- it's been really interesting in a short amount of time, recruiting at USC. We've had good luck in the D.C. area, surprisingly, with really no connections. Then just some random stuff, like I think that Gabe Dynes and Jaden both, like, being in LA, they're both -- Jaden is at the beach all the time. Like I'll walk down the street and he's just randomly there.

Relationships with agents are super important, and they were in the recruitment of Jaden, as well.

**Q. You mentioned in a sense the rivalry. How important is it to you to play ASU every year? Do you want it every now and then? How often do you want to have a home and home with ASU?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: Yeah, I don't really do the schedule. Coach Ruta does on staff and he does an incredible job. Even coming into this, we had like the 23rd hardest schedule. Nobody would have thought that. It's not been documented how hard our schedule has been.

But we saw it put out by a national guy the other day, and I kind of let Coach Ruta do it. I'd love to -- whether it's a home and home, but I let him run the numbers. And he's done a great job at Nevada and done a great job at Arkansas, and I think right now he's done his job from a non-conference standpoint.

Now we have to do our job in conference play.

**Q. Coach, new rule: You don't have to wait four years to come back here. How quickly would you like to come back?**

ERIC MUSSELMAN: I mean, I'd like to come back next year, but I know there's probably a field already. Then it's up to admin, too. The landscape is changing.

But I know myself and our players and all of our families -- this is the second time I've done it, and both experiences were incredible. I used it in the recruiting for this year's team. I told the guys we have a chance to go to Maui and how great it is and how cool it is for your families to come, and with the name, image, and likeness now, we had almost every family -- each player was represented by a family member, which maybe four or five years ago, that didn't happen.

But now with name, image, and likeness, that's one of the huge benefits is just to walk to the pool and just see everybody's family out there. And the weather has been perfect.

For us, for USC, it was a perfect trip. I can tell you that.

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