

# Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

**San Diego State Aztecs**

**Brian Dutcher**

**Miles Byre**

**Pharoah Compton**

Postgame Press Conference



San Diego State 71, Colorado State 62

THE MODERATOR: For San Diego State we have student-athletes Pharaoh Compton, Miles Bird, Coach Brian Dutcher. Coach, we can start with you, some thoughts on tonight's game?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Getting a bye helped, and not only for legs, but we spent four days, no disrespect for Fresno -- we spent four days getting ready for Colorado State. I think everyone could see we were pretty locked in defensively.

We left this tournament last year to Boise, because we got destroyed on the glass. When we rebound the ball, we're hard to beat, so we rebounded the ball at a high level tonight both offensively and defensively.

So defensive rebounding wins championships. Unfortunately, so does free-throw shooting, but we escaped tonight with some bad free-throw shooting. I'm going to fire the free-throw coach, but it's me, so I'm going to give myself one more day to try to get it right.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. For both of you guys, you limited CSU to six two-pointers. What about the game plan and the physicality that kind of limit their looks inside?**

MILES BYRD: Yeah, you know, we came into the game knowing the type of offense they like to run. Main focus was pressuring the quarterback, as we call it. A lot of guys end up at the top of the key, you know, with no dribble, trying to look for cutters and stuff like that. So just trying to pressure the quarterback, pressure them on ball and take

them out of their offense and make them uncomfortable.

PHARAOH COMPTON: Yeah, I just think we did a good job being physical and disrupting them. Just really not letting them get into their sets.

**Q. Coach kind of touched on it a little bit, but conversely, they held you to only one three-pointer. What did they do well to limit your looks outside, and how do you shore up those as well as the free-throws?**

MILES BYRD: No, I think we got some good looks. Luckily, we get to play in the same gym tomorrow. You know, we had shoot-around at a community center today, so just being in here, getting more comfortable, hopefully shoot-around here tomorrow too. Just more reps on the court obviously.

But, yeah, I thought we got good looks. I thought we got what we wanted. We didn't take forced ones, like we've done sometimes in the past. Yeah, just got to continue doing what we did offensively in my opinion.

**Q. Teams struggled from three offensively. 1-for-11. The defense held strong. Is that something you lean on in terms of basketball when you're not having to go to the three-pointer?**

PHARAOH COMPTON: I mean, yeah. Our defense is everything for us, so just not letting them score, that's our identity. Every time we go down and just not letting them score, that's big-time.

**Q. Pharaoh, talk about that portion of the first half they were hitting some early threes, and you had a stretch where you scored. I think you scored ten points the first half. You were 4-of-4, and you sort of took over in about a four or five-minute span. Talk about that stretch where you were playing really well.**

PHARAOH COMPTON: I was just trusting my teammates, just knowing if I go and play hard, they're going to have my back.



**Q. Dutch, just the 1-of-11 shooting, but 42 points in the paint, was that a result of the lack of long-distance shooting, or was it part of the game plan to attack down low?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: They did a good job taking away the three, so we weren't afraid to curl into the paint, drive into the paint, set ball screens, roll hard to the rim. We played around the rim. I mean, offensive rebounding-wise a lot of the plays I ran had two bigs on the blocks. That made it easier to rebound instead of running one in from the perimeter.

We had some sets where we had bigs in the position to rebound. A little rebounding triangle going on. That was a success.

So yeah, I would like to make more threes, but when we don't make threes, we still have a dangerous team able to win games without making the three, which is kind of rare in basketball.

**Q. How important was it to come out here and get this game after suffering a first-round defeat last year?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, we lost four out of five in the stretch, and then we beat UNLV to end the year. We had enough time to kind of get ourselves together, and we needed this win desperately.

I mean, we're still a bubble team, you know, so we can keep winning and play ourselves off that bubble. This was a quality opponent on a neutral floor, and we played well.

So we have a good team, and we have to continue to show that tomorrow night at 9:00.

**Q. Miles, have you ever seen a result like this? I know they kind of talked about it earlier. One made three, 20 missed free-throws, gave up 13 threes, and you still won by nine. Can you talk about how you were able to come out on top?**

MILES BYRD: Yeah, just San Diego State. Defense and rebounding. I've heard that said plenty of times. We could have off-nights shooting. We have a drill in practice where we got to get, like, 130 points shooting-wise, and if we don't get it, we go defensive slide for five minutes.

There's definitely going to be times where in games shots are not going in, and defensively we've got to be good enough where we can still win those games.

**Q. This is for both Pharaoh and Miles. It was really noisy. A pretty big San Diego crowd that traveled out**

**here to Vegas. What does that mean to you having that, I guess, the sixth man behind your back the whole way through?**

MILES BYRD: I mean, Vegas is home for both of us. Both of our peoples live out here, so we love coming back to Vegas. You know, our fan base loves to come back to Vegas too. It's a quick five-hour drive, quick hour plane ride.

Every time I've been in Vegas as an SDS Aztec, we're really appreciative of the show traveling with us and being loud and helping us get victories out here.

PHARAOH COMPTON: Likewise what he said. We're appreciative of having them here and want them to show up and show out every game. That's it.

**Q. Real quick, Compton, your teammate Tae Simmons started today as a true freshman. Can you talk about his efforts tonight.**

PHARAOH COMPTON: He just put in the work every day, practice, off the court. Just being a good guy all-around. That's what he gets. Just stay disciplined, and he earned that.

**Q. For both players, you talked earlier in the week about being focused and sometimes this year you haven't been as focused as you wanted to be. What kind of statement did you send tonight about just your focus, concentration, urgency, intent, all those things?**

MILES BYRD: Yeah, no, I thought we did a great job prepping for the game. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, all practices were really good. We had great focus, great energy.

But we got another one tomorrow. So I mean, we got to hit film tonight with great focus, great energy. Got to hit shoot-around tomorrow with great focus, great energy.

Have to warm up really hard tomorrow before the game. We have to keep stacking. That's our biggest goal as a team. Don't let a win like this slip. Keep the same intent to everything we do.

**Q. What was the key limiting Carey Booth -- he had 18 points yesterday against Fresno State and seven tonight. He had a big game in Colorado.**

MILES BYRD: Just be physical with him. Tae started on him. Tae, for a freshman, he's a physical specimen. I thought he did a good job, you know, making him uncomfortable.

Yeah, you know, just boxing out. He's 6'10" and an uber athlete. So you know you got to fight him on the shot. He did a good job limiting him to four rebounds, zero offensive. I thought we did a great job on him, and that's a credit to our big men.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Questions for Coach.

**Q. You talked about the physicality and the offensive rebounding. Was there a tweak or anything in particular that worked especially well during that 11-0 run at the end of the first half?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I think having two bigs on the blocks. Sometimes we run a spread offense. Sometimes we run it where we have a big ducking in and one rolling. That allowed us to have rebounding position on both sides of the rim. I thought we did a good job of taking advantage of that. So some of the sets we called put us in that position.

Listen, when we lost at Colorado State, they out-physicaled us all game for 40 minutes. They were super physical, and so we weren't going to sit there and cry about it. We knew that's how they were capable of playing, and we had to match that physicality, and I thought we did for a large part of the game.

**Q. Great all-around game for the senior, Sean Newman Jr. Is it safe to say he's the new starting point guard for the tournament?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Obviously LZ is out with the leg, and Sean stepped back in. He did a great job. Obviously we have Taj backing him up and then BJ capable of playing multiple positions.

So we still have a lot of depth at that position. Sean made some really timely plays and layups down the stretch getting to the rim and attacking the basket, which was great for us.

**Q. Obviously both of these programs going to the Pac-12 after this, this has been a high-level basketball tournament for years. You've been a part of it for a long time. Is it a little bit bittersweet to think that this is the last time you'll experience this iteration of the Mountain West Tournament?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I might write a book on the Mountain West Tournament. I've been coming for 26 years, so I've been here for the first one, and this will be our last one. Hopefully we'll make it a memorable run.

**Q. The Rams were 6-for-23 from inside the 3-point line. Can you talk about the intensity that you saw from that aspect of the game?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, we did a good job walling up and not fouling at the rim. We did a good job of trying to push Mbemba further from the basket, not let him get deep, deep post-ups, and he's hard to deal with. He's a big, strong guy in there.

We fought him as best we could. We tried not to switch as much this time. We ended up with guards on him, tried to be in a drop defense and then get back. We dropped deeper on Mbemba, because he's not the shooter that Jorgensen is. We got off it earlier against Jorgensen because he likes to pop, but Mbemba we tried to keep a guard on a guard on ball screen, so he didn't roll us in and post us up.

**Q. Can you talk about the bizarre nature of this game? The final six minutes, 49 seconds without a field goal, and I believe you hit 50% of your last 15 free-throws and still won the game. Talk a little bit about the odd, weird way that went?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: I would have liked to get a shot up, but they didn't even let us get across half court. They fouled anybody everybody and anybody. Everybody missed. Byrd missed. Reese missed. Tae missed. Heide missed. Magoon missed too. Just go down the list. It didn't matter who they picked. We didn't have anybody making them.

It's a credit to our defense. You know, you miss free-throws, and you give in. All of a sudden you look up, and it's a two-point game, but we continued to get stops. We got stops, no matter what happened at the foul line. We didn't let the frustration consume us where we didn't play good defense at the other end.

**Q. If New Mexico wins tomorrow, what can you expect? Give us your thoughts on New Mexico.**

BRIAN DUTCHER: That Buljan will probably get 72 rebounds against us. I think we know what that is. I think he had 18 in one game and 24 in another. Something like that. So it doesn't change for us.

Whoever we play, San Jose or New Mexico, we have to rebound the basketball. We can't get dominated on the glass. If we rebound, then we can play with anybody in this tournament.

**Q. Just your thoughts on the change of the starting lineup. Obviously LZ was out, but putting Tae in, a true freshman for the first time, why now, and what**

## was the thinking?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I told JL that I was going to go with Tae because I felt he gave us our best chance to rebound the ball, and that's been our Achilles heel all year, rebounding. I put a guy in I thought was one of our better rebounders at that position, and he did a good job.

Then Goon came in and did a good job. Those two guys did a really good job rebounding from the power forward position. So real happy with both of those.

Then Heide and Pharaoh both played well too on the glass. Heide missed a couple of put-backs it that were right point-blank, but it doesn't takeaway the fact that he was on the glass and had his hand on a lot of basketballs.

Real happy with the power forward and the center position on the glass today.

### **Q. You talked about the depth of preparation for Colorado State, but what can you say just about Coach Ali and what he's been able to do in his first run as head coach?**

BRIAN DUTCHER: Done an incredible job. I mean, they're the hottest team in the Mountain West. They and Boise State down the stretch were playing the best basketball, but it's an unforgiving game.

You run into one-off night, and you can go home. That's no different for us or anybody else that's left in this thing. So I'm sure Grand Canyon came up a basket short and all these close games, they're getting played in this event, just showed the parity in this league. There's tremendous parity in this league, and that's a good thing and a bad thing.

It's a credit to the Mountain West to have this many quality teams. I hope it reflects at tournament time, but we'll see.

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