

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - UAB vs San Diego State

Friday, March 22, 2024

Spokane, Washington, USA

Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena

San Diego State Aztecs

Brian Dutcher

Jaedon LeDee

Lamont Butler

Media Conference

SDSU - 69, UAB - 65

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then we'll take questions for the student-athletes.

BRIAN DUTCHER: First of all, congratulations to UAB on an outstanding season. They were the ultimate opponent. It went back and forth and we were fortunate to win. I told the team after the game that experience means something. I think all that experience we got last year paid off. When they came back, took a lead, we didn't panic, we stayed focused, we played hard, and we found a way to win.

I know there's a lot of NCAA records, but if there's one for putting fouls on a guy, I think Jaedon LeDee would have it right now. He's hard to guard. He puts a lot of fouls on people. We find him, and to his credit, he plays unselfishly. He moves the ball easily, but when his time comes, he was ready for it. Lamont, down the stretch I just ran high ball screens for Lamont, let's him create space and opportunities for his teammates. So I couldn't be any more proud of these two guys sitting up here with me tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Lamont, when you guys saw UAB inch closer towards the end of that game, what kept you focused as the time went down?

LAMONT BUTLER: We just didn't panic. We have been in that position before where teams came back on us. In the Mountain West, it happens all the time. So we were kind of used to it. We got experience, we didn't panic, and we



knew that the game wasn't over. We had to stop their run and continue to stay with our defense and rebounding, and we made some key rebounds at the end of the game and when we got fouled, we hit our free throws, so that's what helped us win.

Q. Jaedon, you're close to a career high, I think a career high for regulation today. Is there anything about needing to kind of step up individually given the stage being back in March Madness?

JAEDON LEDEE: No. I'm just out there playing my game, playing with my teammates. I know the severity of the situation, for sure. I mean, you win one game or you're done. So I'm just out there giving it my all and just making sure it's not our last game.

Q. Jaedon, your 32 points were the most ever by an Aztec in a March Madness game. Can you talk about your performance today and what made it so easy for you?

JAEDON LEDEE: I guess I just playing hard. My teammates was finding me in the right spots at the right times. Shout out to UAB. They're a really good team. I just was hitting shots today.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll dismiss these two and then return to questions for Coach.

Q. How much film of last year's tournament heading into this week did you watch for your players out there?

BRIAN DUTCHER: None. We watched all UAB and a ton of it. I watched eight full games. I knew they were good, we knew they switched defenses, we knew it would be tough, and we'd eventually find something that works. Jaedon in the first half was awesome. Second half, I thought Lamont controlled the tempo of the game with his ball screens, coming in finding teammates. And so we found a way. It wasn't easy, but we found a way.

Q. Switching the defense, how do you think your players did out there with the defense going from zone



to man-to-man?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I think they stuck with it. There were times we weren't perfect, but we played hard the entire game and that's what it takes. You got to just play hard sometimes and take opportunities when they present themselves. I can't micromanage the game. If it's 1-3-1 then 2-3 then 1-2-2 press back to switching man, we just have to trust our players, trust all the work we've put in, and they did a great job finding a way to be successful in a tough game.

Q. Is there a sign or something that you can notice early on when you can tell Jaedon's going to have a big -- he's had so many this year, but when he's going to have a big impactful game like he did tonight?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Jaedon is just a magnificent player. We can all see that. He makes a mid-range jump shot, he draws fouls inside, he made an early three again. So we had his game working at every level, postups, mid-range jump shots, and the three-point shot. That makes him a really hard guy to guard.

So he challenges the defense every time down the floor. They try to play physical with him, but he's a physical player, but he's also a finesse player. So he's a really hard guy to defend.

Q. How crucial was it to see UAB's two big men get in foul trouble early in the game?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, it was great. I mean, obviously, we put 'em both on the bench early in foul trouble. I don't know how many we fouled out, two or three of 'em. Jaedon does a good job. He's physical and sometimes he's hard to officiate, but if you've seen him enough, you know he draws a lot of fouls and maybe he doesn't even get all of 'em he deserves. But I like Jaedon's temperament where he doesn't cry for fouls, he doesn't complain. He just keeps playing. So he adjusts to the officiating like everybody does, and he just continues to grind out there no matter if he's getting calls or not.

Q. This game kind of had the same feel as Charleston did last year, where you seemed to be in control, but it's just a really tight game and now there's just a huge weight lifted off your shoulders with the win.

BRIAN DUTCHER: I don't know if there was a weight on our shoulders. I think our kids played pretty free. They didn't look nervous. We got off to good start offensively, which we haven't done in a while. So I thought they were ready for the moment. It's just UAB is a good team. It was going to be a back-and-forth game. We didn't panic when

they came back and took the lead. We stuck with it and we made enough timely plays down the stretch. And that's what this time of year is. Not everybody's going to win that deserves to win and not everyone's going to lose who deserves to lose. It's just March madness and survive and advance. All the cliches you want to say, we found a way to survive the game, came up with timely plays and came out with a victory.

Q. On that last possession, they played zone almost the entire game. They went to man and you went to a high-low look. Was that something you called from the sideline or was that something that Jaedon and Jay Pal just kind of did on their own?

BRIAN DUTCHER: It was a set play, just our basic loop play where we hand off to the guards and bring the 4 man up and try to throw over the top. We've had that pass stolen. As much as Jay made the play, Jay Pal made the pass, and it was a perfect pass, and it had to be. They were fronting, he had to throw over the defense, make sure the back side defense wasn't there, and it was just a great pass on his part and made Jaedon look good with that kind of delivery.

Q. Your message as you await the Yale-Auburn game to your team?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Go out, enjoy time with your family right now, we'll leave at halftime and we'll get to work for the next one tonight. So just excited, want to enjoy the victory, and at the same time we'll start getting ready. My coaching staff's already preparing for the opponent and I'll try to catch up, the team will try to catch up, and we'll be ready to play either Auburn or Yale on Sunday.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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