

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Yale vs San Diego State

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Spokane, Washington, USA

Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena

San Diego State Aztecs

Brian Dutcher

Jaedon LeDee

Darrion Trammell

Elijah Saunders

Media Conference

San Diego State - 85, Yale - 57

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

BRIAN DUTCHER: First of all, I want to congratulate Coach Jones and Yale on an outstanding season. They had our full attention. We knew they were good. We watched how they played against Auburn and we were focused and ready to play and that's a credit to my team. So I'm proud of our effort. We're advancing to the Sweet 16. We're heading on the road to play a road game against UConn in Boston and I've got a group that I think will be up for the task.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. What do you think about getting another crack at UConn?

JAEDON LEDEE: It's good. We kind of had a little bitter taste in our mouth last year after they beat us, but we get to play them again and they're a great team. We'll get back, game plan, and get ready to play 'em in Boston.

DARRION TRAMMELL: I think we're just excited we get to get another crack at 'em. Obviously they won a National Championship last year, but I feel like we were right there. Just to get another chance at it, I think we're up for the opportunity. We have the team to do it.



Q. Darrion, what is it about this time of year and you?

DARRION TRAMMELL: I'm not sure (laughing). I think it's just the competition. I love the competition. I love a chance to show who I am, where I come from. It's an opportunity to do that. Just, I think that's what makes me play better in this time with so much confidence.

Q. Elijah, you were matched on Danny Wolf. Just talk about the challenge there. You shut him down pretty well.

ELIJAH SAUNDERS: Yeah, he's a very versatile player, especially for his size. He is capable of doing a lot on the floor. So just trying to contain him and do my best to see how I close him out and try to keep Jaedon out of foul trouble, so they had me on him. So that's all I was trying to do.

Q. Jaedon you had a big game against UAB and a big game tonight. What was the big difference between the close game against UAB and then the 28 points tonight.

JAEDON LEDEE: Just staying focused. That's really all it is. Just out there playing and executing the game plan and letting it flow to my teammates. That's really all I'm doing out there.

Q. Jaedon, you mentioned yesterday after practice that the defensive rebounding from Yale is what stood out to you and the team. How do you think you guys did out there today? You only allowed 20 defensive rebounds.

JAEDON LEDEE: I think we did pretty good. We limited them to tough shots, tough twos. That's what the game plan was. We didn't let 3 and 4 get off with the threes. We limited them to their second-chance points and we hit the glass pretty hard. So I'm happy with the victory. We came out victorious. That's what we tried to do.

Q. Darrion, 13 threes tonight for you guys. I think it's a season high. Why do you feel like the outside shooting was significantly better tonight than it was on



Friday?

DARRION TRAMMELL: I think we just got the hardest game out of the way. First game is definitely always the hardest. Obviously, we go out there and play confident, but I feel like getting that first one under our belt, we come out much more loose and much more confident. We were getting open shots. We've been putting in the time, putting in the work, and there's no reason to go out there and be hesitant. So I think we just let it fly tonight.

Q. Following up on that, you guys have not shot the ball well. You were 306th in the country in three-point shooting coming into tonight, and you a make 13 of 'em. Is there just something about this tournament, is there something about being calm, what is it that makes you guys play this way at this point of the season.

JAEDON LEDEE: I think it's just, it's March. We know the severity of the situation. It's either you win or you go home. These two guys next to me, we got experience from last year, so we knew to weather the storm for the first game and the second game, we were ready to play and a lot more relaxed.

DARRION TRAMMELL: Yeah, just playing more relaxed. Percentages aren't really that important. Guys are going to play out of their minds. Some guys are not ready for the moment. I think we had a lot of guys on this team that were just ready for the moment.

ELIJAH SAUNDERS: Yeah, I'll echo that with the percentages. I don't know what our percentages are, but I see people on Twitter say some stuff about our threes. But every time I take one, I feel like it's going in. I don't know what I shoot from three, but whatever it is, I feel like I shoot better than that (laughing). I'm sure all the guys on the team agree. So just believing that every shot you shoot is going in regardless of how it's been in the past.

Q. Darrion, what does it mean for you to see your fellow senior, Cade Alger, score some points at the end of the game tonight?

DARRION TRAMMELL: It got me excited. He's been putting in the work. He gives us a great look on scout team. Usually one of the best bigs when we play against scout. He gives us great looks, so just to see him go out there and just get a bucket, have the opportunity to play on this stage, it's great. He deserves it.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. It's not often that even in the regular season you get to play 14 guys. Just what it means to be able to have pretty much your whole rotation out there tonight getting minutes.

BRIAN DUTCHER: It's like a dream come true as a coach, that you got guys that put all the work in and they get in some regular season games at the end, but to play on the only game on TV at this hour in the NCAA tournament and play on the biggest stage and get minutes, get baskets, be able to go out and enjoy yourself, that's a reward that they deserve and sometimes they don't get, but it was great that they could enjoy that tonight.

Q. How much has the National Championship game last year been a reference point, if at all, for you guys this year and how much will it be a reference point this week?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I reference it when I try to boost their confidence and say they've got experience on the biggest stage, that this is nothing new to them, that just go out there, enjoy it, play fearless. This is the time of year to be fearless and don't worry about making a mistake. Play your best. And we have experience in the tournament and I think some of that experience showed over the last two games.

Q. UConn's had an incredible season this year, the No. 1 overall seed. I think a lot of teams might be a little frightened but playing them. I didn't get the impression, hearing your guys, that they're intimidated at all by them.

BRIAN DUTCHER: No, that's the beauty of being young. (Laughing). I'll be intimidated, but I'll get 'em ready to play, and we'll go out there and we'll play in a hostile environment in Boston against a great UConn team and see where it ends up. That's the beauty of playing these games. So we're going to go in with a game plan and with a bunch of guys that believe they can win and we'll see how it ends.

Q. This is the second straight year you've had a 13 seed. As your second round opponent, you've kind of imposed yourselves on them and not really let them in the game. Is it as simple, as Darrion was saying, once you get through the first game some of the nerves go away and you do relax or is there a maturity about your group that doesn't look ahead beyond what a seeding or a team from a small conference might be?

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, well, we're not a Power Five school, even though I think we're a Power Five team. So we're the last team in the country that's going to turn our

nose and pretend like we're superior to anybody. We practice hard, we play hard, and we respect everybody we play. So we're not looking at the seed we're looking at the opponent, and that's kind of how we do things at San Diego State.

Q. The Mountain West had another tough result today, a 39-point loss in the tournament. You're the only team left in the conference. The conference has been bashed a little bit. Do you feel like you're kind of carrying the torch for it now and what are your thoughts on the performance of the rest of the conference in the tournament?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I don't think it's any small wonder we are here because we had the highest seed, you know. So seeding's important and some of the teams in the conference didn't get seeded high, and so they had really hard opponents in the first round, second round. So these games can go either way. So seeding's important and we have taken advantage of our seed and we put the work in to get that seed. We don't duck anybody, we play anybody that wants to play in the non-conference, and so we don't win a conference title, we still have a chance to get a high seed, and we have taken advantage of that seed again this year.

Q. Same thing I asked Elijah, the decision to have him guard Wolf and how you think he did.

BRIAN DUTCHER: Yeah, well, Jay Pal, we didn't put him on Wolf because we thought Wolf maybe was too strong for him and would post him up and we thought Elijah, if Wolf did go inside, was capable of banging with him a little bit because he has more strength. So we made that shift to get Jaedon on Knowling at that point when Elijah came in. We switched the matchup up, and I thought it worked out pretty good. I thought Elijah played pretty well, and then Jaedon didn't have to guard more on the perimeter. Knowling is more of an inside player, so that matchup suited us well for this game.

Q. You said you're willing to play anyone in the non-conference, Coach Jones speaks a lot about trying to schedule a tough team for Yale, would you be willing to play the Bulldogs next season in the non-conference schedule?

BRIAN DUTCHER: I'll play anybody but Yale. (Laughing). No, they tried to schedule us. I mean, Coach Jones schedules hard. I mean, played at Kansas, played at Gonzaga, at Santa Clara. So we've had talks with 'em, we'll continue to have discussions, and if we think it fits both teams, like I said it will be an -- I'm not going to travel east to play a game, but if they would be willing to come

out and play us we would entertain that on a one-game type deal. And they're going to be good next year, so it will be a real challenge.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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