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HEADLINE: It's a long road to victory for Aztecs

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BODY:

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. -- The last time San Diego State won a conference game on the road, Bill Clinton still had half a term left and the conference was the Western Athletic.

But that streak -- and several others -- ended last night at the Air Force Academy, as the Aztecs used a punishing defense to beat the Falcons 62-48 for their first-ever Mountain West Conference road win and second MWC win of the season.

"We teased everyone, including ourselves, when we were 10-3 in the preseason," SDSU coach Steve Fisher said. "But finally, we got one on the road."

The other MWC victory also came against Air Force (7-17, 2-8), in San Diego for the Aztecs (12-12, 2-9). Their last WAC win was against Hawaii on Feb. 4, 1998.

"The coaches did a good job of preparing us," said Aztecs' Myron Epps, who had six points and five rebounds. "We watched a lot of film and worked a lot in practice for this game."

The victory also ended a 12-game February losing streak dating back to Feb. 27, 1999 (a 76-72 win over San Jose State) and ended a six-game losing streak -- one that began after the last Air Force victory.

The Aztecs thus sweep Air Force after having been swept by the Falcons last season.

"We knew we had a height advantage inside," said SDSU forward Randy Holcomb. "We wanted to use that to our advantage."

The Aztecs did just that, banging the ball inside against the smaller Falcons. San Diego State had 31 rebounds, to just 17 for Air Force. Holcomb led the way, with game highs in points (18) and rebounds (eight).

Air Force never solved San Diego State's zone defense. The Falcons mustered just 20 points in the first half as the Aztecs recorded 30.

"We figured we had to play a full 35 seconds of defense on each one of their possessions," Epps said, "because Air Force is patient on offense. We just didn't give them anything."

It was more of the same in the second half. Though Air Force did cut the lead to six and five points, San Diego State had an answer every time.

While the Aztecs owned the inside game, they kicked it outside in the second half to stop Air Force's rallies. David Abramowitz hit 4-of-6 three-pointers, finishing with 14 points.

"This was the exact same game Air Force played at our place," Abramowitz said. "The outside shots opened up. I just thank God I hit them. They made (Air Force) stop their runs -- it really stopped the bleeding for us at that point."

San Diego State trailed 10-9 with 10:56 left in the first half. But the Aztecs took the lead 20 seconds later on a basket by Jim Roban, and never trailed again.

"We played good for 40 minutes," Epps said. "We knew we could run more on them too, and we did."