

**October 15, 2014**



An Interview With:

## **COACH RICK BARNES**

**Q. Coach, can you let us know about the Martez Walker situation?**

COACH BARNES: He withdrew from school. He was not allowed to come back on campus. At that point in time, also getting behind academically, he felt like it was best for him to withdraw, and that's what he did.

**Q. You allow yourself to have high expectations for Myles Turner?**

COACH BARNES: I would say that we do, but I think we've got high expectations for all of our players.

But certainly Myles is a player that we're excited about having and a player that we really appreciate the way that he has embraced this situation that he walked into in terms of right from the beginning, through the recruiting process, we felt like -- and he told us this -- that he wanted to be a part of the program where he could be a part of it but not necessarily him be the program.

I think he would also tell you that, when he visited campus, the one thing he felt was that he was able to be around other players that felt the same way, that they just wanted to have a great team. They wanted to win, and they would know that their individual goals would be met by buying into each other and really wanting to be the best team that they could be.

**Q. I guess two-parter about Isaiah. First of all, how's he feeling? I guess he was supposed to be here and took a little spill in practice. Second of all, when you look at your point guard situation, how does he factor into it, and how much has he improved from last year as a freshman playing the position?**

COACH BARNES: I can assure you, he wishes he were here now. Right at the end of practice, we had a time set that we were going to

leave, and we weren't going to wait on them to do the things they need to do. He told everybody this morning that he's fine.

Where Isaiah has improved most of all is he's become more verbal. He's really starting to understand what that position calls for. People have always questioned the fact, can he shoot it? He can shoot it. We told him a year ago that we need him to shoot the ball when he's open, but his idea was always to try to get into the lane, try to penetrate, and create for his teammates.

He does have a really need midrange floater type game. He's great around the basket, but he is willing to shoot the ball, and he's capable. He's a guy that we really believe, when he shoots it, it's going to go in. So he's improved there a lot.

His teammates will tell you that he's a player they have a lot of confidence in because he's a confident player. He's a player that he wants to win. He's very, very competitive. But the biggest change that I'm seeing right now is the fact that he's become much more verbal in practice talking.

**Q. Last season, the basketball team had great games at home, but they would be a different team on the road. How do you improve on your road performance this year, especially in conference?**

COACH BARNES: First of all, our league is very, very tough. It's tough to win at home, but it's really tough to win on the road. But what I would like to see us do, probably more than anything, is play with the same mentality that I think that we play at home, and I think most teams are probably a little more aggressive in playing at home, maybe the word is relaxed.

I want to see us be able to handle situations like, when we get down on the road, when we're down at home. We seem to handle those situations of adversity a little bit better at home than we did on the road. We need to get off to better starts. We didn't do that sometimes on the road.

We're a year older, and I would expect some of the experience that we gained a year ago that we'll hopefully benefit from this year.

**Q. Seeing Jonathan Holmes and Cameron Ridley, two honorable mention all Big 12 players coming into the season. The way they complement each other and what you expect from them down low. What do they bring to the team this year?**

COACH BARNES: John really gives us the opportunity to be a versatile team. He can play both inside out, and arguably over the four years -- and he's really our lone senior this year -- he's been as hard a worker and as committed to our program as any player that we've coached. He really is a guy that is focused. He's done a tremendous job of getting himself in shape. I think he's changed his body greatly, and I think that's going to give him the opportunity to let us be more versatile in terms of because we do have a big team, a tall team, and a long team.

Cam made great improvements from his freshman to his sophomore year. We need him to do that again this year. So when you couple that with Prince Ibeh, Connor Lammerts, and Myles Turner, it does give us a big front line. Connor has improved a lot. Connor Lammerts might be the most improved player from a year ago. John is the guy that we can play on the inside and outside. Some people will question us about our shooting, and he's a player that takes care of that because he's as good a shooter as we have. He's got deep range. When he gets set, takes shots, he's going to shoot at a very high percentage.

**Q. But that needs to improve, doesn't it, the shooting?**

COACH BARNES: I think, when you look at it statistically, you would say that. I think, when you go back, if you analyze our team from a year ago where we have to improve, we got hurt defensively with transition defense, and that was a direct result of not taking care of the ball and, I think, our shot selection.

We know we've got to improve there, and I do think we have guys that can shoot the ball. They take good shots. I think it's hard when they take bad shots and expect to make them. Isaiah has the ability to score in some traffic and so some of those type things. I think we can shoot the ball. That really is not -- I'm not concerned about it. My biggest concern, again, is understanding good shot

selection and protecting the ball from the offensive side.

**Q. Coach, just kind of wondering. The Big 12 traditionally hasn't been known as a league that's big, strong front lines, post players. I'm just kind of wondering, looking at your breakdown this year and obviously add Myles to what you already have, is it tough adjusting to playing in this league when you have a strong front line, or is it a matter of trying to make teams adjust to you? What's it like playing as one of the big, strong power post teams in this league?**

COACH BARNES: Again, that's a good question because we know a lot of teams have gone more to the spread game with a step out forward, which we do that as well. We do that. I think the key is defensively. I think where we've -- the second part about analyzing our team where we have to improve is our ball screen defense. Not just the rotations that we have to get better with, but it's our post players stepping out and helping our guards, giving them the chance to get back in front of the ball.

So I think defensively, that's where a player that's accustomed to playing down low has to be able to step out and help. Cam Ridley, Prince Ibeh, John Holmes, and Connor Lammerts have the ability to obviously do that because they play out there.

I think that's one of the biggest things Myles is learning right now, how he's got to go from one play to the next play. I'm watching that happen with him, and I'm watching him get better every day with it.

So, yeah, we want to play inside out. We do. We want to put it in there, and when you do that, you hope to get fouled. You hope to get to people's benches. On the other hand too, you've got to make free throws, which we did a better job of that a year ago. We have to continue to improve there because we definitely want to get fouled and get to people's benches.

**Q. [No microphone] obviously, had a great freshman year. What has he been working on this off-season?**

COACH BARNES: Well, physically, you would expect all of our players to continue to get better, and he is. He's a player that he works. He does. He's gotten better physically, but the biggest

thing is that we, as a coaching staff, we continue to talk to him about shooting the ball when he's open. That's a big key because we want him to shoot the ball because we know that he can.

Again, he's a player that his whole life he's been able to get the ball pretty much where he wants it, and he does have really a good midrange game. I think he's terrific across the baseline. When he's open on the perimeter, when we're screening the ball or whatever it may be, he's got to take open shots, and he will.

He has worked hard with his footwork, being ready to do that, and the other thing that I think where he's worked hard is trying to be more verbal.

Really trying to understand not only what he has to do but what his teammates have to do all the time.

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