

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Scott Drew

Baylor Bears

THE MODERATOR: We're joined with Coach Scott Drew from Baylor. Coach, talk about the upcoming season?

COACH DREW: Excited to be here this morning. Lot of exciting things happening at Baylor University with our football team.

But excited for basketball to begin. I think Big 12 fans are really going to be in for a treat this year. Last year, No. 1 RPI conference in the country, 70% of the teams went to postseason in the NCAA Tournament. But you look at the returners, you've got four of the five first-team, all-league players returning. 91% of the games involved a rank team last year, and I think it's going to be a very exciting year. I'll probably lose a little more hair, but excited about the team we have.

Q. Rico obviously is a rebounding machine. What do you want to get out of him this year? And what have you talked to him about trying to improve his offensive efficiency scoring-wise?

COACH DREW: I think Rico spent time in the gym in the off-season. He knows that he's somebody that's getting to the free-throw line quite often. So first and foremost, if he can become a 75, 80% free-throw shooter his production is going to go way up.

Second thing, because we have a lot of length in practice, him finishing over length every day is something that will help. His jumpshot has improved. It's a lot softer, a lot better rotation. At the end of the day, making those free throws will be first and foremost.

Q. You mentioned the football team, and I know that excitement in your town is big around them. I was doing a little research. It seems like the start of basketball season has inched back as years have gone on. Do you see evidence of crowds maybe not starting to show up until that football team gets done? Have you guys tried to do some things to combat that and get your people out?

COACH DREW: I think all across the country with football season backing up and playing in the first week of December, I would be a proponent, advocate for moving basketball back. I think it's tough when you



have two seasons like this going on. As far as how far back, I know players don't want to practice anymore. They want to play games.

I know we have other complications with the Masters and different things for TV rights when it comes to March Madness, but I do feel there are a lot of quality games in November, and sometimes they get overlooked just because football season is still going on. And that's across the country.

Q. It looks like you're pretty well set from an experience standpoint in the front court, but you lose Kenny, you lose Royce who gave you kind of leadership as well. How do you replace those guys? Who looks like he'll step into the point guard position for you?

COACH DREW: You look, first and foremost, when Kenny was out a couple games last year with an ankle injury, Lester Medford stepped in, did a very nice job. Austin Mills also helped out at the point. Then Al Freeman played minutes at the guard position.

Other than that, you have a lot of incoming guards, lot of freshmen have an opportunity to help out. But that, replacing Kenny and Royce, two people that were not only very solid with the basketball, whether it's first and second in assists, but also great leaders and individuals, and great team guys, everyday guys.

So from a leadership standpoint, happy with the chemistry what we've seen so far. But at the same time, I know we don't want to have a lot of injuries in the back court because we don't have as much returning experience there.

Q. There's been a lot of debate around the country, Scott, about watchability of college basketball. Do you hear those comments, and what do you say to people that say sometimes games get a little bit funky?

COACH DREW: Well, I think it's most important to look at the TV ratings. I believe last year from the numbers that I remember, from our Big 12 spring meetings, the ratings were the highest they've ever been in March. So I think most people enjoy March Madness, and I think every coach wants games to look a little better. Less turnovers, more skill, better shooting percentages, more points. I think a quicker clock will

help with that.

Officials are going to call it closer this year, which will give more freedom of movement, which will help with scoring as well.

Our football team scores a lot of points and it's fun to watch. I know our basketball players like to score, so hopefully the tweaks this year help.

Q. Obviously a lot of focus on Rico this year. He did have the one off-the-court incident. What did you talk to him about after that occurred, and how has he responded?

COACH DREW: Well, first and foremost, he admitted he made the mistake and apologized to his teammates, coaches. Rico is somebody that is married, a child, has a lot of responsibility on his shoulders, and the great thing is he's going to graduate this year. Hopefully he's going to have an opportunity to play pro basketball.

Then, as a coach, we all want to see our players leave and improve spiritually, socially, academically as well as in basketball. Rico, I think is on the right track for that.

Q. Going back to the rules you mentioned a minute ago, with the hand checking, do you think that will be a situation sort of like last year where it seems like there were a thousand fouls in the first month and then the refs just backed off?

COACH DREW: I know from a coaching standpoint a couple years ago, or two years ago that was an emphasis. Then as the year dwindled on, it got a little more physical when you get into conference play. I believe in the resolve this year with the officials, and I know from a coaching standpoint we're prepared for that to be called all year long.

Q. Taurean was so effective last year as the sixth man. Do you see him continuing in that role? Or do you like the idea of him in the starting lineup? How much did the Team USA competition, do you think, help his game?

COACH DREW: I think he's definitely earned a starting role this year. Last year he was just so effective coming off the bench, and the team was off to a great start, we kind of stayed with what we were doing.

And TP, this year, will be starting barring an injury or incident or anything. But I think this summer really took his game to another level, having an opportunity to be one of eight college players on that USA/Pan-Am team, and just the confidence he was able to gain from that. The way he's approaching each and every day at practice, it's great to see.

As a coach, you always want to see people mature, and definitely he's matured from his freshman year to senior year as far as how he conducts himself. He's been a great role model and example for our younger players.

Again, I think the Big 12 was tremendous last year, but you have so much great leaders coming back and so many experienced players that what happens is your freshmen and of so more look up to those juniors and seniors. No matter what the coach says, players look at each other, and when they see upperclassmen that are successful and see their work ethic, I think every coach will tell you that really speaks volumes. That's why I think it's going to be a great year in the Big 12 this year.

Q. When last a lot of us were talking to you was after that NCAA game in Jacksonville and I remember you --

COACH DREW: Yeah, thanks.

Q. I remember you saying that was going to stay with you for a while. How long did that stay with you? Is that something you're using with this year's group? How are you approaching that into last season?

COACH DREW: First of all, I think coaches remember those losses for a lifetime. When, hopefully, I'm 80, 90 years old, and unfortunately I'll probably still remember that game and other big losses because they just stick with you. At the same time, I think our players that returned, definitely I'll remember that, and that experience hopefully will motivate us this year.

You look at the Spurs lost, in a great example, lost the playoffs to the Heat. The next year they came back and were stronger than ever. I think coaches, again, remember those things. But when the players have that burning desire and they're the ones that have that experience, that's even more beneficial. So hopefully at the end of this year that's something that will have helped us.