

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Bob Huggins

West Virginia Mountaineers



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by West Virginia coach Bob Huggins. Coach, congratulations on a good season last year, talk about this year.

COACH HUGGINS: Thank you. Tell us about this year? Hmm, well, we lost two very good, quality seniors. Juwan Staten had a perfect career for us. I think the big thing that we'll miss is the ball security those guys provided for us. Juwan was one of those guys you couldn't trap, you couldn't take the ball from him, and he made free throws. So he was invaluable in the games.

So we're kind of looking to replace that with some of the guys that actually played a good bit when he and Gary both were injured.

Q. Most important question of the day: Can you tell us about the pants? Where do you come by pants like that, and is there any chance you might wear them in a game?

COACH HUGGINS: We were just talking about that over there. I think the only person that would benefit from that is this guy, Dale Sparks, who takes pictures and makes pictures and sells them.

One of my friends gave me a gold suit to wear my first year, and it's still the hottest selling picture. I don't know if I want to subsidize Dale anymore than what I already have, so probably not (laughter).

But I went to graduation. I had to do a little speaking thing at graduation, and President Gee came in with a pair of pants on like this, and I thought, boy, that's a great idea for Media Day. So I ordered me a pair. He wore one gold and one blue sneaker though, Chuck Taylors. I didn't go quite that far. But I don't have the bowtie either. He had the bowtie on as well. Kind of sets the trend for fashion in our state.

Q. Could you describe the decision last year when you got to that point of deciding to press, and when you decided that this was going to be your philosophy from here on out?

COACH HUGGINS: I was tired of losing, that was the biggest thing. I think sometimes it's good to do something different, and I kind of looked around the

league and really nobody played that way. So it kind of gives you an advantage to a degree when you're doing something that other people don't do.

And we did the system in a different way, it wasn't three quarter court, it wasn't the full court. The three quarter court, and it just got to where it was so time consuming. And I've got a guy named Danny Fortson that wasn't very good in the press, but he was a great player, and I didn't want to get him in foul trouble, so I quit pressing.

Then I happened to run into Kevin Mackey, who I have the utmost respect for. I think he did a better job with pressure basketball than anybody that's ever coached college basketball. I ran into Kevin, we started talking about it, and we talked on the phone a few times. Then Kevin came to Morgantown and watched us practice, and he said you've got the personnel to be able to do this and do it well. And we continued to talk. Actually we still continue to talk about some different things.

But basically what he said was you have to be committed to it. You just can't throw it on. And if they score a couple lay-ups, get out of it, because then your guys lose confidence in it.

I think what it did for us, it gave us great team chemistry, because everybody knew they were going to play. How much you played was up to you. That's kind of what I tried to explain to them. If you play better, you're going to play more. If you don't play as good, you won't play as much, but you're going to play. So everybody went into the game knowing they were going to get in the game and have an opportunity to play, so I thought that was good.

Q. Just describe the versatility that Ahmad brings to the lineup this year.

COACH HUGGINS: Well, we're trying to get him up to speed as best we possibly can. He's a talented guy. He's a guy who can bounce it at 6' whatever he is, 6'8", he's a guy who passes it well.

The speed of the game I think is affecting him right now, but it's just a matter of him kind of getting used to it. Because he does pass, and he sees the floor really well. He can make shots, obviously. He's a very good rebounder.

When we went to the Bahamas, it wasn't certainly like playing in this league, but we did play three games there, and he was our second leading scorer, second leading rebounder. He's one of those guys that just knows how to play. I think that is the first thing I've noticed when I watched him. I think the more I watched him, the more I realized this guy has a great aptitude to understand basketball. I think that's his biggest attribute.

It's kind of like what Deshawn Butler was for us in terms of understanding the game, understanding what's supposed to happen.

Q. The new rule change closely guarded, for a team, for a coach, you like to see your guards guard. How does that change your mentality on defense, especially in the game?

COACH HUGGINS: I don't know. I've been back and forth with it in my head here since the rule changes came out. Honestly, I don't know.

We're going to scrimmage here in a couple weeks. We've got a scrimmage with Temple and see how much has changed, how we have to play.

I'd like to sit here and give you a very intelligent answer, but obviously I can't. So I don't know. I think we're going to continue to try to do what we do. We may have to make a modification or two. But I'm not sure. I don't think five seconds makes any difference, if that helps. I think there's an idea out there by a lot of coaches that maybe you have pressure to burn some clock. But at the end of the day, everybody's going to run a quick hitter into a ball screen anyways, and that's what everybody did against us for the last 30 years because we tried to not let people run offense, so we ended up guarding ball screens or sprints, and that's what's going to happen. I don't think that changes much.

It's just probably going to be more bad shots taken maybe. But other than that, I don't think there is much difference.

Q. Your point guard situation, you had it pretty good with Juwan and Gary last year. Is it strictly Javan and Tarik now or is it Dax or Jaysean or do foresee passing the ball up and using as many players as you can to get to where you want?

COACH HUGGINS: There's not a lot of absolutes, but absolutely Jaysean will not be in the equation. Dax could be. Dax' ball skills have gotten better.

I don't really want to change Dax's mentality. Dax has been a guy who goes and tries to score, and we need

him to score. So I don't see him playing a lot there. He could. He's skilled enough to play there.

Obviously when Beetle got hurt, that hurt us at point guard, but Jaysean's getting better, and better. Tarik's getting better and better. It's just a matter of them being there and understanding their responsibilities a little bit more. But I think we're okay there.