

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Trent Johnson

TCU Horned Frogs



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the TCU Coach Trent Johnson. Coach, welcome, and your thoughts about the upcoming season.

COACH JOHNSON: Another year in the Big 12 grind, but obviously we're excited about the opportunity to move to our new venue. Ed Schollmaier and Rae Schollmaier have done an excellent job, along with all our other donors and our administration spearheaded by our athletic director, Chris Del Conte and our Chancellor Boschini, putting us in an environment this year that we'll compete at a high level. It's been a long time coming.

For me, having had the opportunity to be in numerous leagues, usually your donors and your administrators put their financial and their fate on the back end after you've won a lot of games. So our people have been extremely impressive in terms of their commitment to our men's basketball program and the women's basketball program even before we became relevant.

So I'm looking forward to this year in terms of trying to make that next jump, that next step, so to speak. That's going to be extremely hard. We all know in this league it's extremely hard moving up. So we're excited.

Q. Coach, I know you lost Cameron Williams, who is going to replace that edge for you?

COACH JOHNSON: You use the word edge, and he's probably one of the most competitive individuals I've been around. He has great instincts and rebounds the ball well and really improves his ability offensively. So it's going to be done by committee. A kid by the name of Jalen Miller, who is very, very talented from Seagoville High School right in Dallas is very talented, but he's going to have to be brought along at a faster rate than we normally would.

But there are some opportunities out there for a lot of guys. You know, Chris Washburn, Karviar Sheppard, Brandon Parrish, Mike Williams, Chauncey Collins, all those guys that have been in the program in the previous three and four years, there are opportunities now to step into roles where they can score the ball and be more effective at the offensive end. So I'm excited about that moving forward.

Q. You mentioned Karviar, and obviously came in as a very highly touted recruit. He's had two solid seasons, but what does he have to do to, I guess, take his game to the next level?

COACH JOHNSON: It's interesting. You say highly touted, I think his rankings are nothing but negative in terms of young kids and young basketball players because rankings mean nothing.

But what he's had to do is what he's done. He's had a very good spring and a very good summer, and he needs to play within himself. He's been developed to where he shoots the mid-range jumpshot effectively. And defensively, him and Chris are good defensive players in terms of their ability to communicate on the back, rebound the ball and so on and so forth. So his continued improvement is important, but I think he needs to play within himself. That is the most important thing, as opposed to trying to do things he can't do.

Q. Chris Del Conte and everybody is excited about the new basketball arena and wanting all us to come see it. You touched on it earlier, how much is it helping your program now? And conversely, how much did it hurt, if at all, playing at Wilkerson-Greines and just the whole year of transition?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, it didn't hurt us because obviously we won our share of games when we were playing at Wilkerson-Greines.

How does it help? Well, obviously with young people, student-athletes and basketball, they want to play in the venues that are nice. They want to have nice facilities. So it helps from a standpoint of recruiting, from a standpoint of fans. They want to be in a venue that's really nice and classy. So it helps in that regard.

But the bottom line is, I've said this often since going into year four, our football program, our baseball program, our track and field, our rifle program, there are a lot of programs in our athletic department that did a lot of winning before they had really good facilities. So under my leadership, our role is to make sure we make this next step when we're capable of beating the good teams and the good people.

We had our opportunities last year, and we didn't quite

frankly close some situations, some deals, so to speak. So moving forward, you can have all the facilities in the world, but you've got to compete at a high level and win games.

Q. Coach, your guys last year and the winning record and the 18 wins and use that sort of as a springboard?

COACH JOHNSON: No, no. You know me, Carlos, I dwell on today, not tomorrow. The thing for us moving forward is after today, we've got like a 4:30 flight out and 9:00 p.m. practice. So we look forward to that. This is a situation for me and it always has been where you don't live in the past.

Moving forward, we have an opportunity this year with a lot of new additions, with four guys on this basketball team, they have to have a huge role for us to be successful. We have some guys that have been through it, so to speak. The key for us is leadership, and then obviously guys having opportunities to score the ball and doing that with confidence and taking care of the balls, doing that with confidence and being able to pass and catch and doing that with confidence. Hopefully that will put us in a situation where we get over the hump. But in the past, I don't know, that's not something I dwell on a lot.

Q. For the last couple years, Anderson seemed to have the ball in his hands an awful lot?

COACH JOHNSON: Who is that? No, go ahead.

Q. You've already put him out of your mind, I imagine?

COACH JOHNSON: No, he's a good kid and a special player.

Q. He did seem to be the guy that at crunch time, he had the ball in his hands a lot, the guy that you lean on a lot. How do you fill in for what he gave you guys the last couple years and he was likely to step into those roles?

COACH JOHNSON: It's going to have to be done by committee: Lyrik Shreiner, the freshman; Chauncey Collins, who is as talented as there is, and then he's a sophomore; and then Mike Williams, who is a junior. Those three guys will be at the point guard position. So you'd like to think that three players can replace one.

But the thing that Kyan brought more than anything is he had a lot of confidence, a lot of swagger, and obviously, he could handle the ball. So versus pressure, he really relieved a lot for us.

And then Trey Zeigler was the other one from a leadership standpoint. So those two guys will be

missed, but obviously, again, as opposed to dwelling on the past, and I respect your question, but moving forward, those guys that have opportunity to come in and make plays, so they'll be challenged to do that.

Q. Speaking of football a little bit, we've heard from a few other coaches and just talked to Bob Bowsby about the talk now about maybe moving the start of men's basketball season back maybe three weeks, a month, to avoid the conflict of football, and maybe play non-conference teams a little bit more. Of course this would mean moving back the NCAA Tournament. Do you have any thoughts on making basketball a semester sport?

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I do, I think a one-semester sport helps academically. But having been in the SEC and being in the Pac-10 at that time, I think this league in my experience does a heck of a job promoting basketball from top to bottom. So I think the onus is probably myself. From the way I look at it, it's on the people who cover the game and who report the game. You guys have a great voice, you have a great mindset in terms of what goes on.

So I think moving it back helps academically. In terms of how many people watch and how many people are attending, that depends on where you play, who you play, caliber of games and so on and so forth.

Q. The rule changes this year, have you figured out how to benefit their team or hurt it?

COACH JOHNSON: I think the rules changes will benefit my team or our team if their coach keeps his mouth shut and stays in the coaching box and the officials call the game the way it's supposed to be. That's just a joke. Don't get me going on that.

No, the five-second guarded one is going to be interesting because kids are really going to handle the ball, bounce it a little longer. Me personally I've always addressed my group that they're in situations (indiscernible), if you master it, take the five-second count and eat it, that way you can get your defense formed, not let a team run out on you.

And on the 30-second shot clock, I don't know how much that's going to help or hurt. The NBA has a 24-second shot clock, and I think you look at what happens late in the year, those scores dwindle because of the level of play and the commitment. The scouting defense, all good teams have good players that make you run. I think more than anything, the shot clock you might see more bad shots just because they have to play faster.

I think our game is in great hands. I think the people who are officiating and the people who are coaching it,

and the people who are playing in it, they're all going to make the necessary adjustments to make sure the game flows and continues to get better.

Q. Just a really quick follow-up. Your team's full of good shooters and scorers this year. I wondered if that freedom of movement played into your hands?

COACH JOHNSON: My team's full of good shooters and good scorers this year? I don't know about that. Depends on what practice you're watching.

But freedom of movement, yeah, I think that helps the flow of our game. But, again, the onus is on the people who are calling the game, the people who are teaching the game to make the necessary adjustments. But in terms of good shooters, good scorers, we've got some experience. Some nights that ball goes in, some nights it doesn't go in. So your ability to get back and defend and limit the other team that has good scorers and good shooters will probably determine whether you're successful. But freedom of movement will help.

I go back to what I said years ago when I was coaching other places, I always look at Big 8 or Big 12 basketball, depending on the time of the year it was. You always saw the physicality of that league and the way they played. The culture of that league is unbelievable. Now having been in it and going through my fourth season, it's true, true to form.