

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

## Bruce Weber

Kansas State Wildcats



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Bruce Weber of Kansas State. Coach, welcome, and your thoughts on the upcoming season?

COACH WEBER: We're excited. I think we have a new group, a lot of new faces. For our staff, it's been a fun summer and fall into practice.

Got a group that works very hard, very coachable, and play hard. I think our biggest obstacles will be so many new faces, the inexperience, and then just the injuries. Getting somebody back like D.J. Johnson coming off a couple foot surgeries and being out 16 months, it's going to take him a little bit of time.

Carlbe Ervin, one of our new guys who is coming off a little procedure, it's taken him a little bit of time. So staying healthy, just getting that experience.

And then kind of mixing it together, our older returning players from D.J. Johnson, Wesley Iwundu, Justin Edwards, Steven Hurt, mixing in the new guys and finding a nice balance and good group that I think will be very competitive.

**Q. Coach, typically coaches like to use their shortcomings from the previous season to work with the group and motivate the new group. But when you talked to us at K-State Media Day last week, you said you were trying to distance yourself as much as possible from what happened last year. Why is that and what is the new motivation you're using with your team?**

COACH WEBER: I think the biggest thing is we don't need negativity. Part of the good positive energy focused on what's at hand.

Last year is over, it's done with. It's been well-documented. We had our struggles and we had some really nice moments also. But at the same time, let's focus on today, tomorrow, just staying positive and coming together as a group that enjoys each other and is coachable, as I said. You can't do anything about what happened in the past. But you can control what you do at practice today, what you do tomorrow, a week or two weeks from now in an exhibition game and be ready for those.

**Q. Can you kind of define Steven Hurt's control? Does it change at all? He seems like a guy that's drifted outside some on offense, but does he have to be a big rebounder for you inside?**

COACH WEBER: I think the biggest thing for him, just like Justin Edwards, it's an adjustment. Big 12 basketball, best conference in the country, RPI the last couple years. Every game you're playing against high-level coaches, you're playing against high-level players. It took them a little bit of time to figure it out.

Also, we had to figure it out. Last year a lot of our stuff was geared on Thomas Gipson going inside. That's where he was good.

Now I think Steven, his best attributes on the offensive end are definitely his shooting, facing up, shooting the 15, 17 footer, even out to three. So we've got to find ways to get him baskets, get him open so he can shoot the ball. At the same time, we've been on him, he has to be a presence on the defensive end inside. He is our big body. He's going to have to deal with the contact, clog the lane up. He's going to have to rebound.

The other day, in the scrimmage, he was our leading rebounder, which is a positive thing. He's not one of those flying around guys that are going to be getting these dunks and all these rebounds. But he has to be solid and do his job on a daily basis, and that's going to help us.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned Steven and Justin. How much more after their first year at K-State, how much more can you expect from them the second year after that learning curve?**

COACH WEBER: I hope a lot. I know they expect that. They've had, again, some nice moments. Steven Hurt at Oklahoma last year, huge game, did some big time things.

Justin, games against Kansas, Iowa State down the stretch. These are top teams. These are Sweet Sixteen teams, and top teams in the conference and they played well. So they use that as a positive motivator. They knew they had to work a little harder to compete. You're competing against some of the top players in the country. That work ethic, getting your

bodies right, putting in the time. I believe that they're going to take a nice step forward.

**Q. You had mentioned on Saturday that you liked this group or you love this group, and you believe that they can be competitive and maybe shock some people down the road. What kind of opportunity is this for you to do that with ten newcomers? And do you like this role, so to speak?**

COACH WEBER: Well, I like the team, as you mentioned, and it's fun to coach them every day you go. They haven't been perfect by any means, but I'd say nine out of the first ten days we just coached them. We didn't have to beg them to go hard or get after them to go hard, so that makes it a lot easier.

Now you can worry about the stuff you're supposed to worry about, you know, setting up the angle on the screen, the defense, getting in the right position or how you're going to guard something and you're not wasting at much time.

I think the injuries are a big thing. I've said all along, we get experience, we get healthy and stay healthy. Then you've got to win some close games.

I think we saw it with our football program. You lose two heartbreakers and it's -- you know, you worry about your team going one way or another, and then you have a big letdown, like they did the other day. Now they've got to rebound from that.

I think that is the key. You win some games early. They can be ugly, but you win them. You start feeling good about yourself, and then that goes a long way as you get into the season.

**Q. Coach, we just heard from the coordinator of men's basketball officials about quite an extensive amount of rules changes. Freedom of movement, hand checking, the elimination of the five-second count. What are you and your coaching staff going to do to help the players adjust with so many different changes this year?**

COACH WEBER: It's something we've addressed since our league meetings back in May, and talking with Curtis, and talking to him throughout this summer.

For me, with the shot clock, just watching NBA games, watching the flow of the game, I don't want to have bad shots at the end of the shot clock. I want to have good shots. We're going to have to work harder earlier to get those good shots and have good flow to our offense.

The defensive part, we've always taken a lot of pride in

being physical, being aggressive. It's going to be that fine line. I think with a young team and inexperienced team, we've got to be more of a team defense, helping people. So it will be interesting to see how it all unfolds.

I've already had officials come twice to practice. We're going to have it another time this week and a couple times next week when we've got an exhibition game. So I hope we're helping the guys adjust to it.

I think we're going to watch the video as a staff. We watched it with the officials, and then the new officiating video. Then I've never done it with the players, but I've thought about doing it with the players also. This is as much as we can help them and tutor them and help them understand earlier, I think it will benefit our staff and the players.