

# Golden State Warriors

## Media Conference

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## Steve Kerr

### Media Conference



STEVE KERR: Hi, everybody. Before I take any questions, I just want to thank all of you for persevering with us through this year and doing all this on Zoom. It was very different, obviously. We had to do what we had to do.

I like this job a lot more when I actually get to see all of you and speak with you face to face, and there's just a much more personal feel to it that way, and hopefully we'll be back in that dynamic next year.

But thanks for all your patience and for doing the job that you guys do. Always enjoy working with you, and let's try to be back together again next year.

With that, I'll answer any questions that you might have.

**Q. How difficult was it this year, and how difficult do you think it will be this off-season, kind of just managing the timelines -- next year you'll probably have two lottery picks if everything goes as planned percentage-wise and then you have James coming back, and then you have Steph in the middle of his prime. This year was just James, obviously; next year might be a few other really young guys. How difficult was it and is it to kind of navigate both of those factors moving forward?**

STEVE KERR: Well, that's the job. Every year is totally unique. I know my first year, the difficult part of navigating the season was to have to coach a player like David Lee, who had started and been an All-Star for me as a first-year head coach, to go to David Lee and say, You're not going to be starting anymore. David deserved better, frankly. But he got hurt, Draymond played out of his mind, earned the spot.

That season was very difficult on David Lee. He ended up helping us dramatically in the Playoffs. We won a championship. It all worked out.

But my point is that was the challenge that year; how do

you take an All-Star player and tell him he's going to come off the bench. That's a difficult thing to do as a first-year coach.

The next year it was something different. This year it was something different. Every year presents its challenges, so you have to embrace each season for what it is and then navigate your way through that and try to help your players be the best versions of themselves.

This year everything changed with Klay's injury, and that was the challenge was to say, Okay, how can we be really competitive but also try to bring our young players along at the same time. That was, I think, a worthy goal because to be where we want to be when Klay comes back, we need these younger guys to be pretty good.

Was that easy? No. It was not easy. But you see the benefits as you go through the season. You see what Jordan Poole meant to us by the end of the season. Think how much better of a team we're going to be next season with Klay back, knowing that Jordan developed the way he did.

So as it relates to James or these two first-round picks or one first-round pick, it's the exact same concept. You want to bring guys along so they can help you.

Now, the difference next year is, knock on wood, Klay is healthy, we come in from the start, it's a different mindset. New season, new set of circumstances. The mindset is, Let's get it done, whatever that means, then you adapt to that.

That's what coaching is about. That's what being part of the NBA is about. That's what managing a team like Bob does is about.

**Q. You said after the Memphis game that you didn't think that the last quarter or so of the season was not a fluke. What from that last part of the year do you want to repeat next year and build on over the off-season?**

STEVE KERR: Well, there was an energy about the



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group. We were the No. 1 ranked defense. We were the No. 8 ranked offense. History tells us if you want to be a championship contender, you've got to be top 10 in both offense and defense.

To do that for a quarter of the season with the group that we had, with the injuries that we had, was really encouraging.

What did we learn from that? Well, we learn that Juan Toscano-Anderson is an important piece of our team, that he can really help us next year; that Jordan Poole can really help us next year; that playing the way we did with the floor spacing and the movement was really effective for us.

If you look at our team during the five-year championship run, we had a lot of players who really were able to fit, but we had a style, we had an identifiable style.

That's where we need to get to is a point where we can be a top-10 offense and defense and rely on who we are, which we saw over the last 20 games, and then incorporate the young guys in ways that not only fit in with what we do but enhance what we do.

That only happens with player development and team development as you go through the course of a season, and so those are the circumstances we'll be facing next year, which are actually really exciting, because if we can start the season like we finished it this year, only with more talent, we've got a real chance. That's exciting.

**Q. Bob was just in here talking about no plans to trade James Wiseman. He expects him to be on the roster next season. What did you learn through his rookie season, in and out of the starting lineup? Did you feel you made any mistakes with him? And as you look for him as a year two player, how do you get the best out of him?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I mean, I think as far as James goes, I think he's an unbelievable talent, and we absolutely should nurture his talent and continue to help him grow, and that over time there's no doubt in our minds this guy is going to help us. He's going to be a really good player in this league.

What we learned, which I've talked about many times, is to expect a lot from a guy who doesn't get a Summer League, doesn't have a training camp, and is playing in a brand new set of circumstances during a pandemic. Those are high expectations, to expect anybody to come in and get it at 19 and figure it all out in a season like this where as an organization ourselves we didn't have everything all

aligned because of Klay's injury and because of the turnover in the roster and lack of camp.

Very, very difficult set of circumstances for James to enter into.

As far as his development, he works very hard, and our coaching staff did a good job with him. There are certain things I can do better. Putting him in positions to be more efficient offensively for sure, but that's all part of the process.

He has to grow. We have to grow with him. But that's all fine. That's how this whole thing works. But as I said, the difference is next season he'll have a year under his belt. We will have a year under our belts.

We kind of know who we are as a team. We know where we can help him get better and where he can help us as a team, and then it's on everybody to make that improvement and help the process.

**Q. Bob was just saying that you and Steph maybe met on Saturday to discuss a little bit -- I don't know, exit interview, but also maybe any Olympic talk. When do you expect to hear from him on what his plans are with that? And Bob also said no real doubt in his mind that he can get an extension done for Steph this year. Steph said back in December he wants to be here, maybe play until he's 40. What are your takes on those two things?**

STEVE KERR: Well, yeah, I mean, obviously we want Steph back in the worst way. There's no reason to think why that won't happen. We're excited about that. We're excited about next season. You know, coming back with Draymond and Steph playing at such a high level to finish the season and to get Klay back and to have the opportunity to fortify our roster, to see these young guys emerge, it's all very exciting.

I think that was the general feeling with our players in our exit meetings was, this is exciting. We've got a lot to look forward to.

As far as Steph's summer, he's going to make that decision on the Olympics. What I told him and what Pop has told him, frankly, is take a little time. You can't make a decision like this two days after your final game of the season. Steph will take some time off and he'll make whatever decision he decides to make, if he wants to play on the Olympic team or not.

Of course whatever he decides is great, for us, for Pop, for Team USA. Players have to go with their heart and

prepare the way they have to prepare and understand their own needs, and so that's all part of the process.

**Q. With the tailbone thing, how much time just off from not playing do you think -- the trainers said that really needs to fully heal up?**

STEVE KERR: It's never even been brought up. It's just sort of understood that the season is over, it's going to get better -- I don't know if it's going to take a week or a month, but you saw the way he played the last three weeks, so it's not going to impact him in terms of how he plays.

It's how long it hurts. No real concern with that.

**Q. Bob explained that he knows this team needs more veterans and that he tried to acquire some, but maybe ended up in second place in those races. Having more of a veteran presence have helped change the equation this season, and what could adding more vets next season do to help strengthen you guys?**

STEVE KERR: Veteran players win in this league. It's very rare that you see a rookie come in and lead a team to a championship. Magic Johnson did it; Larry Bird came close to doing that. I think maybe of the modern guys, Dwyane Wade was pretty good his rookie year. I think it took him a few years to win a title. LeBron didn't win it -- he didn't even get to the Playoffs his first year.

We all kind of know how the league works. The knowledge you gain in this league from year to year is crucial, and what that means for a team's kind of institutional knowledge as a group is crucial to winning games, because these games come down to possessions. Everything matters.

Yeah, if we can add a couple of vets, that would be great. During our five straight trips to The Finals we always had great veteran presence, and that matters. I'm of the thinking and the belief that Klay's return and our final 20 games will be very much in the minds of potential free agents when they think about where they want to go.

Whether that means we get a couple of guys to come or not, we'll see, but during our five-year run we got a lot of guys to come here who made really a big difference, David West and Zaza, JaVale McGhee, those guys all come to mind.

Obviously we had other guys, as well, but that kind of veteran know-how and stabilizing influence could be very helpful.

**Q. It seemed watching Klay on the bench the last**

**couple of games, it seemed like he wanted to go to the scorer's table and check in himself. I wondered where he is in the rehab process. And Bob mentioned he might not be ready for Game 1, so kind of a realistic timetable and where he is mentally.**

STEVE KERR: Well, I think in a strange way, the end of the season for Klay has meant the end of his time apart from the team. Even though he was with the team all year, he never felt a part of it because he wasn't playing. But the season ended and we had our exit meetings the next day. It's like, Klay, you're back.

The next time we get together as a team, you're part of this. You're going to be on the floor.

Now, will he be playing in a game yet? We don't know. But he'll be running around and shooting and practicing with us and doing all that, we know, and we'll just have to see where his progress is at that point to determine when he's able to play.

But emotionally, spiritually, I think it's a huge lift for him to know we're now all on the same timeline in terms of getting back together when we can play basketball again together. I think it's a good, uplifting feeling for him now. He's making real strides.

**Q. You guys played your best basketball down the stretch. With the starting lineup that played a lot of three on five offense, Draymond and Loon weren't really guys that teams paid much attention to on that end, is that sustainable next year? I know you'll get Wiseman back and get Klay back, but (indiscernible) two guys that really aren't scoring threats, how sustainable is that to play good basketball?**

STEVE KERR: Oh, I think it's sustainable. We played good basketball exactly with that lineup. We went 15-5 in the last 20 games with those two guys starting. No. 8 offensive rating in the league during that span, that's pretty good.

Now, is it something we want to throw out there for 40 minutes? No, but it's a look that had, again, the No. 1 net rating in the league.

I think what we have to think of as we build the team is, yes, that can work. We just showed it can work. But how can we get better in terms of as a coaching staff are there schemes we can alter, is there a substitution pattern that we can change to help, is there a player out there, a free agent who could fit in better with a substitution pattern, do we start a different starting lineup.



All that stuff is fairly debated. But what we do know is that Loon really helped us win games this year. Draymond really helped us win games this year, and they played very well together.

The answer is it works, but we want to get better, and maybe we can find ways to improve as we go forward over the full 48-minute game.

**Q. I know you've said that Draymond's offense is basically gravy, but it seemed at times that a little bit of offense from him helps Steph out, creates a little space, and also maybe it helps the other guys out. I was wondering what you thought of that.**

STEVE KERR: I agree. I agree. I think my point has always been that no matter what Draymond does, he's going to help us win, and that's the truth. He's so good defensively and passing the ball.

But there's no getting around the fact that when he makes a three, makes a couple threes, gets 10 or 12 points, we are a better team. Draymond knows that, and I think the whole point going into next year is for me as Draymond's head coach and as the coach of this team to really encourage that kind of aggression but to help that aggression.

I've got to do more to help Draymond offensively, and those are things that I have to improve upon as we go into next year that I'll be thinking about.

That's what I do every season. I try to think of ways that I can improve my own job, my own coaching; how can I help each individual player and how can I help the team.

So it's not anything new, but we now have a really good look at this team, whereas a year ago we were completely in the dark. That's where I think our real advantage lies. We know what we have and we know where we need to go.

**Q. Steph and Draymond touched on this the other night, and I'm curious as to your opinion. You know better than anyone what it takes to win a championship in this league. How far away do you feel like you guys are right now from winning another title?**

STEVE KERR: Well, I mean, I saw Draymond's answer the other day. We didn't make the Playoffs, so we're kind of far.

I actually agree with that. I think it would be arrogant for us having just missed the Playoffs to say, Hey, we're right there.

We're a ways away, but we like the path that we're on. We love the fact that -- all the things I just mentioned, we've got Steph and Draymond playing at a high level, we've got young players who have emerged. We know James is going to be better with a year under his belt. We've got a couple first-round picks, we've got free agency coming up. Most importantly we've got Klay coming back.

You throw all that together and I like our chances to make a big leap.

But no, we can't sit here and honestly say we're close to a championship because Draymond is right; we've got to make the Playoffs first before we say that.

**Q. We know you love bigs and think about defensive rebounding a lot, but you team really plays well when you go small, and if you're looking at the West there's a lot of bigs. Did you learn anything new about how to handle that balance this year? Was it anything different than in the past, having another year, weighing when to go big, when to go small, et cetera?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I think one thing I learned, honestly, is that when I really held the players' feet to the fire, they rebounded well. When we played three or four good games in a row and we rebounded fine and we sort of forgot about it, we'd have a game where we just got destroyed.

Part of it is on me to have that appropriate fear we talk about every single game from a rebounding standpoint.

I think I need to do a better job, frankly, of doing it every day in practice. Even if it's just two minutes, even if it's a comment here or there, jolting them. I've got to do a better job of helping them on a daily basis understand that if we're playing small we're undermanned and all five guys got to engage and nobody is allowed to go unaccounted for on a possession where they don't box out and we give up two points.

That's what I've learned, and next year we'll see what the roster looks like with the players we have, the free agents we have, and we'll see what combinations we're playing and all that stuff. But we won't know that until next year.

**Q. As a follow, do you think Jordan could do more of initiator, play maker stuff next year? Do you see him growing as that guy off the bench you can put the ball in his hands?**

STEVE KERR: Absolutely. You can see his play making down the stretch. He gets places most players can't get to.

He's so much more than just a shooter. So he's very dynamic and made great strides, so I have no doubt if we have Klay healthy, it's really fun to think about Jordan and Klay in those minutes when Steph and Draymond are off the floor. That's exciting.

Doesn't mean it's going to automatically work, but maybe Jordan, Andrew, and Klay together, that's a pretty dynamic group that you've got three guys who can score in different ways. And Jordan with the ability to make plays, get into the paint and distribute the ball, now you're talking about some firepower. That's exciting.

**Q. What do you think about the play-in tournament? Do you like it or not? Should it continue to go on?**

STEVE KERR: Well, I joked that -- a month ago that I would hate it if we lost and love it if we won, but honestly I love it. I think it's great. I think it's great for the league, and what's great for the league should be more important than being worried about the eighth seed missing out on the Playoffs.

I think it should be something we stay with. There was more interest in more games down the stretch than there has been in a long time. There were some mini-races within teams trying to avoid seventh. I thought it was fascinating as a fan.

Now, are there things we could tweak? Maybe. Maybe. I thought -- and this is just being brutally honest, and you guys know I'm usually brutally honest, but was it a blow to suffer such a devastating loss to the Lakers and then have to turn around and play a team that just won? Yeah, that was tough.

On the other hand, they had to fly across the country and there was a fatigue factor that came with that, too.

But there's no doubt the team that finishes eighth or seventh and loses, if you lose in gut-punch fashion like we did, it's tough to get off the mat. I think that showed itself in the first half of the Memphis game. They came out confident and ready to go and we looked like we were still stunned from the loss in LA.

As a coach, that's something I recognized, wished I could have done a better job helping the players get over that loss in LA. But is that something the league could address? Maybe. I don't know what the solution would be.

But all in all, as the coach who lost out in the play-in tournament, I'm still a proponent. I think it's really good.

**Q. What's your biggest regret and what are you most**

**proud of this season as a coach?**

STEVE KERR: Biggest regret is just not making the Playoffs. And as a coach you always go back and think of things every single year, unless you win the championship, there's still that you go, Man, I wish I had done this, I wish I had done that.

Those are the things that you guys are going to want to know, and those are the things that I'm not going to tell you. (Laughing).

But I will tell you there are absolutely things that I regret that I could have done better with.

As far as what I'm most proud of, it's for sure the finish and the fight the guys showed after 50 games where we were sort of lost in the wilderness. I thought our guys did a great job of climbing their way out of the hole and making the season very meaningful.

**Q. Kelly Oubre is kind of your big free agent. His role fluctuated; he was in and out of the lineup. He did kind of have some success off the bench late as more of a small ball 4. Would you like to see him continue with you guys, and if he did, what would you envision his role as?**

STEVE KERR: That would be great to have Kelly back. He's really, really talented. Obviously it was tricky at times like finding the exact right role, but it was tricky for me, honestly, with the entire roster to put the pieces together this year. You guys saw that. It was a struggle.

He's a free agent. He's going to have to decide what he wants, and we will have that discussion.

I said it before, Klay is going to start when he gets back, so would Kelly be interested in coming off the bench? That's a question only he can answer.

He'll weigh his options, we'll weigh ours, and we'll see where it all goes. But really like Kelly, really think he's got great potential to be very helpful on our team, and we'll see where it all goes for him.

**Q. You mentioned in relation to the draft last year the acquisition of Wiseman, but this year sort of looking ahead now in terms of free agency and the draft, are you really looking for that dynamic sort of guard like a Collin Sexton type that can really drive to the basket, that really gives that sort of energy? We saw last year like Tyrese Haliburton going at 11th for Sacramento, which is probably a steal in the draft. Is that something you're trying to pick up this year, to look for**



**that sort of elusive guard that might go under the radar in terms of a Sexton or a Haliburton?**

STEVE KERR: Well, that's really more Bob's job than mine. As a coach obviously I have a voice in personnel, and I will watch the guys that our scouts have suggested that we select and I'll put my opinion in.

I think the difference this year compared to last year, and we'll see where the lottery lands, but when you're in the No. 2 slot it's very different from being in the 11th slot. You know, you're thinking differently. You're thinking about impact long-term and about ceilings, about star potential. We all know within a few years we're going to need new cornerstones of the franchise.

So if you have a chance to take a guy like James who could potentially be a cornerstone, then you do it. If we're picking 14th with our own pick or seventh or eighth or something with the Minnesota pick, well, that changes the perspective.

It changes your options because the guys who are possible cornerstones are probably already gone.

Then you maybe have the luxury of thinking about your roster. You're more likely to end up looking at guys who have more experience who are more prepared to play, and that's certainly something we're going to consider.

But again, that's Bob's job. I will take part in it, but it's really his ball and he's going to make the play, and I'll have 100 percent trust in him because he's always done an amazing job with the roster and with the draft. He's been a brilliant GM and I'm lucky to work with him.

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