

# Golden State Warriors Media Conference

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## Steve Kerr

Media Conference



**Q. Assuming you've met with your staff and all by now, how did that go, and what are the things you want to try and impart to those guys?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, we've had exit meetings with players and have also had meetings with my coaching staff today. Very productive.

I think for me, the way I look at this season is that sometimes losing can give you clarity in terms of where you need to be better. It probably would have been tough to walk in first day of training camp this year and say, hey, we've got to improve in this area or that area and then the guys are looking at me like, we just won the damn championship.

It's a lot easier when you lose for everybody to look in the mirror and say, what can we do better. What can I do better, what's can we do better.

So that's the job of the coaching staff this year. Really figure out where we can improve and find ways to teach those things, implement them in the summer, next training camp, and get better. That's an exciting prospect.

That's the whole idea is to use this opportunity to improve and to take another step.

**Q. As you looked in the mirror, what are some of those revelations you've had over the last week or so?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I mean, some of the stuff is really low-hanging fruit. We can't be No. 1 in pace and No. 29 in transition efficiency. That doesn't work. That has to be emphasized.

You look at the Lakers' series, the two games that we won, we did a good job of defending without fouling. Four games we lost, we fouled like crazy. It's right there. There's certain things that are really right there for us to improve upon.

But that's on me as the head coach to get our staff and all

the players locked in right away next year on X, Y and Z. This is where we're going to make improvement. We've got to have our practices and drill work laid out to make the specific improvements that we need to make, and we've got to see results. That's part of what coaching is about.

**Q. Two years ago I remember some of the noise coming out was you guys needed more veterans. You obviously overloaded the roster with youth this season. How did you see that impact the product on the floor, and do you think there needs to be an uptick in veterans?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I mean, I think roster construction is a conversation that Bob and I have every year with Joe and with the front office, and it is very important finding the right balance. That's going to be part of our conversations this summer.

Ultimately it's not my job; it's really more Bob's job to construct the roster, but the great thing about Bob and the way we've operated here is that we've always collaborated, so there will definitely be a lot of collaboration this summer on putting together the best possible roster for next year.

**Q. From a coaching standpoint, how much managing or coaching this whole two-timeline thing over the past couple years but specifically this season?**

STEVE KERR: Well, number one, I've loved coaching these groups last year and this year. I've thoroughly enjoyed coming to work every day and working with the players that we have. That's kind of the first thing you want is to -- every year, you want to enjoy the people you're seeing every day, and we've had that.

I think we have implemented over the last two years a player development system that has been very productive. We've revamped our coaching staff two years ago, and Jama Mahlalela has really taken charge of that development plan and run with it and done a great job. We've got really good player development coaches. So it's all part of it.

You're trying to raise young guys and teach them good

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habits and teach them how to win, and you're hoping your veteran players can help mentor those guys, and you put all that stuff in place.

Last year we won the championship, this year we lost in the second round, so you can fit the narrative however you want, but every year is going to present different challenges, and you just have to meet those and do everything you can to help the team.

**Q. You mentioned Bob. Obviously his contract is still up in the air. What has he meant to this organization for the last however many years he's been there, and how big of a loss would it be if he were to leave?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, Bob is such an important part of our organization, not only as one of the faces of the organization, out there in the NBA world meeting with other executives and agents and representing us in that regard, but also with his relationships with other players. He's got such credibility with our guys.

There's so much history there. The continuity that exists between Bob and the older players means that he can have those difficult conversations, and sometimes even during games, which is pretty rare, but something that has been a huge help for me.

Bob and I have a great friendship, a great working relationship, and I absolutely hope he comes back, but it's also a case where I want what's best for Bob, and if he decides that he's going to leave, of course I'm going to support him 100 percent, and we will remain friends for a long time.

I would miss him, but I support him regardless of what he does.

**Q. So much of the Warriors' ethos over the past few years has been intangible; it's been culture and joy and chemistry. How different was this season in regards to all of that than previous seasons, and what do you need to do to get that back?**

STEVE KERR: I think there was some of that that was lost this year for sure. There's no hiding from it, the incident with Draymond and Jordan at the beginning of the year played a role in that. It's hard for that not to impact a team.

We feel like we have a great group of people on the roster, on the coaching staff, in the front office. We have a way of doing things that we're very proud of, but those things were definitely challenged this year.

Anytime some trust is lost, then it makes the process much

more difficult, and there was some trust lost. That's as blunt as I can be.

The only way to try to correct course is to continue to communicate with players and coaches, and those relationships have to be built. The bonds have to be built. I think that's a or focus for us this off-season is we have to get back to what has made us really successful, which is a really trusting environment and a group that relies on one another and makes each other better.

I don't think that was all gone, vanished, this year. I think there was a lot of that that we relied on to get as far as we did. I think down the stretch and into the Playoffs, I thought a lot of who we truly are came out, and that's what gave us a chance. Obviously the talent, but the way the guys competed and came together in the Playoffs for me was very inspiring and hopeful because I know it's in us.

But that was threatened during the year, and the regular season matters. It really does matter. I know in this day and age of the players resting and all that stuff, sometimes people say, just throw that out. It all matters. We won the championship last year after getting off to an 18-2 start, and these vibes were incredible. That carried us forward.

This year that was really challenged, and we have to fix that.

**Q. You have one year left on your contract, and typically in sports this is about the time when two sides start talking about extensions and so forth. First question would be have those discussions started at all? And the second question, how much longer would you like to coach? Are you a lifer or what?**

STEVE KERR: Every coach says he's not a lifer and then he turns into a lifer. That's what I've found.

Our organization has a lot to sort through this summer. My contract situation is not, nor should it be, at the top of the list. Right now Bob's contract situation is number one because that influences a lot of the player decisions that have to be made, contracts, draft, free agency.

We will get to my stuff whenever that happens, and I'm in no rush for that.

I love coaching. I love coaching these players. I love coaching the Warriors, love living in the Bay. But I'm also in the NBA, and all you have to do is look at your phone every day and see the next Hall-of-Fame coach that's fired. It's insane. I've never seen the league like this.

I'm under no illusions that I have a lifetime job here or



something like that, but I love what I do, and I hope to be coaching here for a long time. But you never know how things work out, so we'll see.

**Q. You mentioned lack of trust or some break of that. Is there still work to do on that with this team?**

STEVE KERR: Sure.

**Q. Is that going to take something different than just the normal off-season stuff? Could there be discussions about this or meetings or whatever, camp, kumbaya camp? What can you say generally about how that can get rebuilt?**

STEVE KERR: Well, I think one of the tricky parts of having a roster that's so different in terms of the age groups is that it's pretty natural that over a decade you're going to build up these really strong bonds, and those bonds are going to be connected within the team through multiple people, whether it's coach-player, player-player, GM-owner. We've got this group that has been together for a long time and has earned a lot of trust, and then we've got a lot of young guys who are just trying to find their way in this league.

I think those relationships within the organization have to be forged, and it doesn't happen overnight. It's like any other human relationship; it just takes time. For these types of bonds to forge, you have to go through some trials and tribulations, and you have to get through stuff.

But you have to purposely connect and communicate in order to build those bonds, and I think that's something that is ongoing all the time with any organization, any team, any business. Relationships are kind of the bedrock of what you're building.

We have to continue to allow these relationships to grow, but we need to purposely forge them, too, through not only the experience of what we're going through but through communicating what everybody is feeling.

**Q. What do you want to see Jordan improve at this summer, and do you still view him as like a franchise building-block type piece?**

STEVE KERR: Absolutely. I called him one of the foundational six at the end of last year, and I still believe that.

It's important to remember, Jordan did some really good things this year. He had a tough playoff stretch, but he averaged 20 points a game for us. It's hard to average 20 points a game in the NBA.

He helped us win a lot of games. He helped us win a championship a year ago. He would be the first to admit it wasn't his best season. But that's how these things go. That's how careers go.

As his coach, it's my job to help him get better and help him really find his groove and find a good comfort zone next year.

I think the number one thing is he can be more efficient. He's such a talented player that we can help him get better shots offensively, and then on the defensive side he's proven when he puts his mind to it, he can fight and get into the fight and hold his ground. People are going to attack him because that's the nature of the game. Every NBA game you watch these days, it's a pick-on game, so some guys are just going to be picked on.

I know he can hold up to that.

Those are the areas where we're going to really work with Jordan, and I know he's got the capability to improve dramatically and come back and have a great year next year.

**Q. Entering the off-season, are there any glaring holes on the roster in your mind or areas that you want to see evolve from a personnel standpoint?**

STEVE KERR: Not really. We love the guys that we have on our team. You can always get better. You can always take a look and see what's out there. But look, we were one of the last eight teams standing for a reason. We've got good players.

Hopefully next year we'll have more continuity, better health. Can't control all that stuff, but I think we're all excited about who we have on this team.

**Q. The third year for players can sometimes be a leap year. Do you think Jonathan can be a heavy impact winning player by next season, particularly in the Playoffs?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah. I do. I think, of course, people are going to be focused on the Playoffs because that's the most important time of the year, but if you look at Jonathan's regular season, he did some great things. I think the biggest thing for him is to continue to grow.

I tell him all the time, he's got 15 years ahead of him. He's got such a long career ahead. He's got a lot of ability, and he's just in the process of learning the NBA game. He's two years in, and he's accumulated a lot of knowledge, but

he's got a lot more to accumulate.

As long as he continues to work, which I know he will, he's a great kid, he wants to be great, as long as he continues to just put his head down and work, he's going to get a lot better.

**Q. Why do you think he wasn't ready for the playoff rotation?**

STEVE KERR: I think the biggest thing was with Wiggs and Gary in place again, it lessened the need for what JK's strength is right now, which is on-ball defense. The best way for Jonathan -- and I told him this, best way for him to get more playing time is to become a more versatile player.

I look at every combination that we put out there as a puzzle. The puzzle has to fit. The more things you can do, the more easy it is to fit into a five-man lineup.

Rebounding is a huge thing for JK. If he's going to be a great player in this league, he's got to rebound. A four-man with that kind of size and athleticism, that's the next step, and continuing to work on all the things that he's working on already, the shooting and the ball handling and the court vision, understanding what's happening on the floor. It's all going to get better because he's so young and because he's willing to work.

You put all that together, and there's no reason why he can't come in and have a great season next year.

**Q. When you talked about this specific group maxing out, how much confidence does it give you knowing that you'll have Gary back for a full season, and you should expect to have Andrew back for a full season, as well?**

STEVE KERR: It gives me a lot of confidence. I said a little while ago, the regular season matters, and I felt like this group finally found its form probably during the Sacramento series. But there were still so many question marks. You could see it in the Lakers series when we were threatened and countered at every move.

We weren't quite sure who we were at the end of the year. We found ourselves in terms of our grit and our determination, and that's why we beat Sacramento and put up a pretty good fight against the Lakers, but we didn't have an identity. Steph said it after Game 6; we didn't have enough variety in the way we could score. That only happens through repetition in the course of the regular season.

I think coming back next year, hopefully as you said with

Wiggs and Gary for full years, young players continuing to get better, I think from the start we can build that identity and be a more efficient, more versatile team come playoff time.

**Q. You mentioned postgame this was not a championship team, which is honest. Nine times you've been up close to what a championship team looks like. Knowing how hard it is to win a championship, how do you stay close to that next season?**

STEVE KERR: Well, our older guys are obviously the ones who are responsible for the banners that are hanging in there, Draymond, Steph, Klay. I know they are determined to come back and play at a high level. I have no doubt that they're going to be prepared and ready to start camp. There will be some energy and maybe a little more of an edge than we started with this year from those guys.

The young guys have to just continue to work and grow.

As I said, this has to be a team-wide thing. Everybody has to improve, including me. We all have to really do some reflection, and then as a staff we have to present to the players, here's how we can get to the next level and implement that immediately starting this summer and try to check those boxes and take the next step.

**Q. (No microphone).**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, yeah, I expect them back, but who the hell knows.

**Q. Speaking of Klay, he got a lot of heat after Game 6. What do you think about his season overall, and how do you see maybe ways he could improve?**

STEVE KERR: I think Klay's second half of the season was fantastic. I know things didn't end the way he had hoped in the Playoffs, but I think there's a lot of things we can do as a team to help get better shots for each other next year that I think will help Klay.

I think the biggest thing for Klay is to have a great off-season. At 34, 33, I think, with two major injuries behind him, this is a time where he's got to be more prepared than ever for the first day of training camp, not only physically handling the injuries and the strength and conditioning part of everything, but also understanding that as you get older you've got to get better and areas you can improve upon. You can't rely on the same things you could rely on at 28 or 27.

There are areas where he can get better, and he's going to focus on those things this summer and come in and have a great year next year.

**Q. With you guys ending the season a month or so earlier than you wanted to, how much can this extra rest actually be beneficial next season, just getting the guys' legs back under them, and you mentioned the edge, as well?**

STEVE KERR: It can help. It wasn't lost on me last year that we won the championship after missing the Playoffs and losing in the play-in tournament, not only the rest but the edge. Lakers are having a great year. They missed the Playoffs last year. They had a chip on their shoulder and obviously had to make some moves in the middle of the season to find themselves.

I'm sure LeBron and AD probably benefitted from having a longer summer. You have to take advantage of that. It's a combination of rest and that chip on your shoulder.

I know our guys well, so they'll take advantage of both.

**Q. You have a lot of experience, obviously, navigating personalities and egos as a coach. You started the season with a crisis and the incident that happened between Jordan and Draymond, but how challenging was this season for you as a coach, and what did you learn about yourself throughout the process?**

STEVE KERR: It was challenging but in a relative fashion. I'm still coaching basketball. I still get to come into this building every day and be around a bunch of people I love being around and do what I love. Challenging, yeah, but I'm not digging ditches. I'm doing what I love.

Every season is filled with challenges, and there's definitely more sort of outside noise than ever before in this job, as every coach can attest to.

Yeah, I think despite the unique circumstances stemming from that early-season incident, I still had a great time. I still loved this season, and I'm excited for next season.

**Q. You've mentioned the incident now a few times, obviously, and Draymond is at the heart of it, obviously. How necessary --**

STEVE KERR: To be fair, you guys have asked about the incident, too. I didn't just bring it up.

**Q. I'm about to ask about it again. I mean, he comes with a lot, Draymond, obviously. His future is up in the air over the next two months, whatever. How**

**necessary do you view him having to come back for this team to remain in title contention, and do you desire to have him back with everything that comes with him?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, yeah. Look, if Draymond is not back, we're not a championship contender. We know that. He's that important to winning and to who we are. I absolutely want him back.

He's a competitor. He's an incredible defensive player. We can check all those boxes. He and I have built a really special relationship that has run the gamut over the years. We've had our share of run-ins, but we've been through so much, we really care about each other and work together well.

He knows that he had a great season this year, from a basketball perspective, but he knows that he also compromised things by what happened back in October. So part of him coming back next year has to be about rebuilding some of that trust and respect that he's earned here for a long period of time.

One thing I love about Draymond is he's always brutally honest, and he can take that sort of critique because he knows it's the truth.

I want him back. I think we all want him back. Hopefully that's exactly what happens and we get ready to make another run next year.

**Q. Do you talk to Draymond about that? When he's kind of weighing his options, are you pitching to him or saying, this is why we need you back, or is it just a he's going to choose what he's going to choose, I can't sway him either way, I'm just going to let it be?**

STEVE KERR: We have not talked since our last game, but we will be talking soon, and we will discuss lots of things.

Yeah, I think he wants to be here, and he knows we want him here. That's the main thing.

**Q. You touched on this earlier, but you mentioned how you had never seen it like this in terms of coaching being cycled out. What do you think is behind this trend? What are the causes do you think?**

STEVE KERR: I think the nature of the world we live in today is behind it, the power of social media, the value of these franchises. I would say 30 years ago, most of the owners were people who had bought their teams at a really relatively low price and were probably more likely to be

content with having someone go ahead and operate the franchise, and they weren't taking hits themselves from the media about their job or their performances as owners.

You think about how everything has changed. Suddenly these franchises are worth billions and billions of dollars and social media is crushing every player, every coach, every day. There's so much pressure on every franchise to win, and it is hard. It is so hard to be the only team standing at the end of the day.

You throw all that in the mix, and I think owners are much more likely to make big sweeping changes.

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