

# Golden State Warriors Media Conference

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## Steve Kerr

Media Conference



STEVE KERR: Our staff has been fantastic. Players have really bonded and connected, and they have been working hard, and I think everybody is really excited for the season.

So a lot to look forward to, and obviously getting started a week from now. So here we go.

**Q. Your contract is obviously going to be kind of an early-season topic. Where is that at from your perspective, your contract, and would you be comfortable coaching this season on an expiring deal?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I feel great about my position here. I want to be here. I know Mike and Joe want me here, and so I'm very confident something will get done. But I'm not stressed about it at all.

You know, I'm perfectly capable of coaching whether I have one year left or an extension. Makes no difference. But I fully expect to be here.

**Q. Mike was talking about the connectivity that he has already seen this summer, especially with somebody like Chris Paul, brought up him leaving for a 6:00 a.m. flight to come for a workout. What's your perspective of Chris this off-season as far as really trying to ingrain himself with everybody?**

STEVE KERR: I really like Chris because he likes phone calls and not texts. So Chris is old school. He wants to talk. We've had four or five great conversations this summer.

I remember a few years ago pulling him aside after Phoenix beat us in Phoenix, and I told him how much I admired him and his competitiveness and just his basketball intelligence. Obviously we have had a lot of battles over the years. We did have one game together, the 2015 All-Star Game, and I remember him taking over the game in the last five minutes, and our team won. Like, yeah, that guy would be fun to coach.

So I'm thrilled to coach him. He's one of the great

competitors I've ever seen; his command of the game, the way he controls the action. His teams tend to get a great shot possession after possession. He understands what wins.

So I'm really excited to coach Chris and I know he's really excited to be here.

**Q. The NBA recently passed rules resting star players. How do you think that will manage the workload of your star players?**

STEVE KERR: I don't think it will impact anything. I think we have a great relationship with the league and a great respect for the rules that are in place. We understand we are trying to entertain basketball fans everywhere. That's the business. You know, putting on a good product, putting on a good show for our fans and giving fans the opportunity to come out and see our guys play.

You know, injuries are a part of the game, and there are going to be games where guys are going to miss, but we plan on complying with the league's rules, and giving NBA fans everywhere as much opportunity to see our guys as possible.

**Q. Mike used the word "connectivity," which is exactly the same word you used about the lack of it the last time you were sitting there. I'm just wondering, how much of the emphasis this summer came from you guys saying please get connectivity with each other, and how much of it was organic and coming from the players?**

STEVE KERR: I think it's a combination. My job as a coach is to help them connect. I think last time I talked to you, I think I probably said that I think I did the job well last year. I think a big part of my job this year is to get the team connected. But that's a season-long process.

I think Mike Dunleavy and his staff did a great job this summer of putting together a roster that should connect well on and off the floor. I think sometimes losing gives you some clarity. I think I probably said that at the end of the year, too, and I really believe that.

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You know, a year ago, we came in off a championship, and let our guard down a little bit, frankly. It's human nature, but it's sort of the way things work. And so when you lose in the second round and you feel like you've had a disappointing year, it's a lot easier to come in and be focused. It's a lot easier for me to come in as a coach and be more demanding, and I think the players will expect that, too.

**Q. You and Bob had this, from the outside, a very enviable relationship between front office and coach. How is your connectivity with Mike Dunleavy so far this summer?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I mean, Bob and I remain very close. We talk all the time.

I think I could not ask for a better new partner than Mike given that Mike and Bob are best friends. You know, Bob is one of the best GMs in the business, as we know, and has been for a decade. He was able to groom Mike over the last few years. So there come be a better situation for me.

Mike and I have gotten close. We've spent a lot of time together. We have a lot of shared values in terms of what we think wins, what kind of player, what kind of team.

So we are on the same page and we really enjoy being around one another, and I anticipate this being a great relationship and partnership.

**Q. How are you feeling about the center rotation entering training camp right now? I know you don't necessarily place a huge emphasis on size but can you kind of reiterate your feelings about that?**

STEVE KERR: Well, first of all, I'm very comfortable. I think signing Dario was huge for our team. He is really the kind of player that fits us well, a little bit like Bjelica a couple years ago. He's a different player than belly but he's a similar style in terms of his ability to connect the game with shooting and passing and awareness, court awareness.

Dario is bigger than Belly. He's a very physical player. But he's going to fit us well, either as a five or playing in a 2-big lineup as well.

I think his addition really made all of us feel very comfortable going into camp at that spot. Then I think the addition of Usman to the two-way spot was a really nice pickup, as well. He's a young player that's got some of the qualities that Draymond and Loon have. He's not going to

wow you with athleticism, but strength, awareness, length, ability to guard multiple positions. Usman is a good player. I think we are excited to be able to add him to that rotation as well.

**Q. You obviously have your established starting lineup and you have Chris coming in. Have you thought any more or made any decisions based on the starting lineup?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, we basically have six starters, I mean, the way I look at, and only five can go each night.

So I haven't decided yet what we're going to do. I want to see training camp. We are going to try different combinations and take a look. Obviously all six guys are going to play a lot of minutes for us.

But you know, if this is going to work then everybody has to embrace it regardless of who is starting and who is not. It only works if the whole team buys in. I know these guys well. I know five of them really well and I'm getting to know Chris. The one thing I know about all of them is they want to win more than anything. They are an incredibly competitive group and I'm very confident that we'll figure it out and the guys will buy in and find a way.

**Q. There's obviously various combinations you can go to, but how comfortable are you with what you would consider the hyper-small lineup that would be Chris, Steph, Klay, Andrew and Draymond?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, we'll look at that for sure in camp and exhibition games. See what that looks like. It's hard to imagine that that wouldn't click pretty well, given that you've got a lot of talent and versatility and scoring on the floor. You know, I think that lineup, you know, putting Loon on the floor at the five, you could do, as well, with four smaller guys and Loon at center.

But as you know, we've started Loon and Draymond together for years. They are a great combination. Probably one of the few 4-5 combinations with the league that is unique like that in terms of more screening than shooting. You know, most people are throwing four shooters out there. We are still throwing two bigs out there and it's worked well but we've always had the change up of going small.

So we are going to look at all that.

**Q. Can you comment on your experience this summer with USA Basketball, and just being the head coach of a team that's not the Warriors for the first time, is there anything you take away from that experience that you**

**learned about yourself or that you're going to bring into this season that's going to make you any different?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, that's one of the best parts of being part of USA Basketball is there's so much to learn and there's so much that's different with the game, with the FIBA game, with the experience itself. You know, coaching a team that's only together six weeks. Coaching with an entirely different staff. It was an amazing experience.

No regrets. Obviously we are disappointed that we didn't win but the guys were fantastic. Nobody ever complained about playing time. Everybody was all-in. They committed to the goal. They worked like crazy. Staff was amazing. The support from Grant Hill, Sean Ford, Jim Tooley; really, USA Basketball is a special organization.

So great honor to be the coach and very proud of the effort that the guys put in, and I absolutely learned a ton from Spo, from Mark Few, from Ty Lue. Those guys are incredible coaches. It's one of the best parts of the experience is just collaborating and gathering each day to discuss the team. You definitely get ideas from each other, and some of those I'll for sure bring back.

**Q. Last year you guys got off to a slow start and were struggling on the road. Looking at the schedule. How much of an opportunity do you see, having a lot of the first few months at home being at home and in the Pacific time zone, how much of an opportunity do you think will that be, and how much urgency at the beginning of the year?**

STEVE KERR: You know, I never pay too close attention to the schedule because it is what it is. You're going to play 41 at home, 41 On The Road, and you just go take it a week at a time.

I do think we need to have a good training camp. I think it's imperative that we get off to a better start this year, not just in terms of our record but in terms of our preparation.

I think it will be, frankly, very helpful that we are not going overseas; that we'll be here. We'll have a really good extended time to practice and work and prepare. You know, ultimately, last year, we weren't good enough defensively at the start of the season and that's why we went 0-5 on that early road trip.

So we've got to make sure we defending at a high level by the time the season starts so that we can win at home and on the road.

**Q. Defensively, theoretically, you should have Gary Payton II for a full season at start of the season, and same thing with having Andrew Wiggins for a full season. What's that confidence like, that boost, to have those guys for a full season again?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, it's a big deal. We know what we are capable of defensively given the guys who have done it already.

Two years ago, we were I think a top five defensive team if I'm not mistaken, second to Boston, I believe. So getting Gary back, being able to start the season with him is a big boost. Knock-on-wood, hopefully we stay healthy.

But I think the defensive end is where it has to start. I mean, on the road last year, I think we were, you know, close to dead last. If not dead last, then right there and on the road. It was a bizarre season in terms of the numbers. A lot of people talked about it being fluke-ish.

But I believe that when a team is not well-connected, then the road is where is that lack of connection will show that, and I think that's what happened last year. That's why I'm going to really keep talking about this connection and the fact that we've got to bond and come together right away to get to have that good start.

**Q. With Trayce, can you talk about the importance of four years of college, 124 games, I believe it was, to come into a system like that as a rookie, and what part of his game do you think that can maybe be expanded coming into the NBA as a double-double guy like he was at Indiana?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, Trayce is an impressive young pro secretary. You don't see that kind of college experience very often anymore. But you immediately recognize the experience level and the advantage that that gives him.

What I like about Trayce, he plays the way we like to play. He's a good passer. Dribble hand-off guy at the top of the key, good screener. Gives us a lob threat that we don't otherwise have, which is a really nice addition.

And I think he's just -- he's the kind of guy who feels the game well. He's got good feel for passing, cutting movement, and a lot of the stuff that we already run, he runs really well. Trayce is a really intriguing prospect and be fun to watch him play.

**Q. With Kuminga, last year you spoke of him as almost exclusively as a four in your rotation where you play him. Do you still view it that way given the way this roster is composed, and has there been maybe a**

**little bit of a pull between the things you and the coaching staff want him to do to get on the floor and get minutes, and maybe the things that he wants to do just in growing his own game as a young player, a young dynamic player?**

STEVE KERR: I'm excited about JK. He's had a really good summer. I was getting reports routinely when I was overseas and the coaches were all raving about him, saying that he's really worked hard and understood what's needed from him.

I think it will be very helpful for him to play with Chris Paul. Chris has a way of making the game easier for people. I anticipate them spending some time on the court together and Chris helping to unlock some of that potential. Otherwise, you know, JK, he's in his third year and getting better and working hard, and he's right on track to get to where he needs to go, so I'm excited.

**Q. (Off-mic.)**

STEVE KERR: Well, I look at combinations. I think one thing that happened last year, we didn't have a shooting big last year. The year before, we had Otto Porter and Belly. You could definitely play JK with a shooting big. But tougher to play him last year with Draymond and Loon. You just don't get the spacing that you would optimally like to have.

So I think we have more possibilities this year with Dario, because of Dario's ability to pass and space the floor as a big. I think that can open things up for everybody.

**Q. Probably not on the top of your mind, first night of the season, Kevin Durant comes back here and first time to play in front of fans. What kind of reception do you think he'll get?**

STEVE KERR: I think the fans will give Kevin the reception he deserves. Someone who was Finals MVP and played a huge role in hanging two banners in this building.

It's been so strange that here we are, four years later, and he still hasn't had the chance to play in front of our fans. We have obviously gone against him several times, but the gyms have been either empty or cheering for his side.

It will be great to get him back at Chase and in front of our home fans. He deserves that ovation that our fans will give him that night.

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