

Golden State Warriors Media Conference

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Mike Dunleavy

Media Conference



MIKE DUNLEAVY: Let me start by saying I actually want to thank you guys for the year for covering the team and the whole thing. It's a long year for everybody. A lot of ups and downs. You guys deal with a lot as we do. So thank you guys for a season that, unfortunately, for us we feel like ended too soon. Disappointed in our year, even though we finished with more wins than last year, I thought overall we came up way short in terms of what we thought talent-wise, experience-wise, all those things that an ownership group, a front office, coaches, players, all signed off on the roster to start the season and we just got ourselves too far behind the 8-ball, frankly, as the season went along. Chased it down at the end and it was just too little, too late in a tough Western Conference. So, a lot to figure out, lot to improve on, but disappointed to be here today, frankly.

Q. Steph and Draymond and Steve have been vocal about wanting to bring Klay back, wanting to keep that core together. How possible is it for you to build a championship team around them if they do stay intact?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Well, considering they won four before, I would say it's well within the realm of reasonability. But we got to, you know, certainly we want Klay back, first and foremost. I expressed that to him yesterday. I think our players have expressed that, our coach, front office, ownership, look, everybody wants Klay back. He's still a really good player and I think we have enough good players in our system, we have enough assets to acquire good players and we have the ability to keep getting better. So, given that, as long as those guys are still really good, like, yeah, I think we can contend and compete. But we just unequivocally have to improve.

Q. How much will financials come into play this summer and how reasonable is it to improve the roster, make the moves you want while -- I mean, I guess do you guys want to duck the luxury tax entirely?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: The financials will always come into it,

it's a part of the puzzle. I wouldn't say we're at a point now where we're saying we got to be out of the tax or we got to be under a certain apron or anything like that. We're going to look at everything. I think if you've got a team that you feel can contend for a championship, you do what it takes financially. So, we'll look at everything, we'll balance it out. It's hard to say right now in terms of like what it's going to look like and all that, because this is April, this stuff goes into June and July. But you know how Joe is with his willingness to spend and compete that, I don't think there will be any restrictions, but we'll also be prudent. I mean, to put a team out there that can't make the playoffs, like we spent 400 million dollars this year, I wouldn't recommend that. So, we'll figure it out, but I don't think we have anything set in stone in terms of parameters we got to live by.

Q. Do you feel, you mentioned expressing to Klay that you want him back yesterday. Do you feel like that's likely, do you feel like it, I mean reciprocal, or do you think this is going to be potentially a thorny negotiation?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: No, I think it's a mutual feeling. I mean, the guy's been here a long time. He means so much to the organization. We really, really value him. So there's nothing that would make me think that he want to go somewhere else or we don't want him back. And for that reason I'm hopeful we can make it happen, but, you know, it's a deal both sides got to be good with it and we'll work through that, but I think hopeful, optimistic, I am, about it.

Q. This season was kind of the microcosm of the Draymond Green experience. Can't live with him at times, can't live, can't win without him. What is your feeling of certainty that he's part of this going forward and how do you navigate that if he is, if he's, sometimes he's just not available to you?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think in terms of having him back, I think very, very high likelihood. I can't imagine a scenario where he's not back. Could be wrong, but, man, he's signed up under contract, we value him, he's a core piece of what we do. So, fully expect him to be back. I



think we won over 60 percent of the games he played in this year, so you know how meaningful he is to winning, and he'll continue to do so.

As far as the other stuff, part of it I think is managing him, Steph and Klay as they age. These are long seasons, these guys have been through a lot, so we've got to manage the emotional, the mental, the physical stress, and the fatigue these guys take on, and that will be a part of the process moving forward. But I think Draymond, I think he's in a great place mentally, just evaluating him, observing him over the season, after the suspension. I think he's learned from it, I think he's better, and we'll continue to work on that stuff and have it on top of mind, but, you know, I think we're in a really good place with him and excited to have him back.

Q. How would you assess the season for Jonathan and then being that extension eligible this summer how do you see his future here in Golden State?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: I think really good growth out of JK. Frankly put a ton of time in this past off-season, came in, had a great pre-season, and got off to a little bit of slow start, but found his way and had a stretch there in the middle of the season, was, you know, not only one of the best players on our team, but in the League. And that's where we see the potential with him. Like with him and our other young guys, vitally important that these guys take another step because that's how we're going to balance this thing out with our more mature legacy players, with a younger core group that can push us forward and help us win. Like Moses, JK, those guys are extension eligible, we'll get down the road with that, but unequivocally we value them, we want them here, so we'll see how that goes.

Q. Earlier you said you had the assets to acquire good players and Joe's never been afraid to take big swings, whether from Durant to reports of inquiry on LeBron, whatever. I realize you can't talk about specific players, but how realistic, given the position you're in, given your roster, how realistic is it to take a big swing, to add a marquee player?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah I think the premise of getting better, that's what we got to look at, for sure. So, that will be taken into consideration. We also got to be mindful of the player who it is, the age of the player, the skill set of the player, it's all got to fit to be able to put the chips on the table to make a move. So those are the things we'll kind of look at and evaluate, but, yeah, there's multiple ways to get better and that's certainly one of 'em.

Q. Moses has had a kind of a, you know, a strange

first few years from a rotation standpoint. Every time it looks like he's broken through, he DNPs. As he enters year four, as you rebuild the roster this summer is there a desire to kind of clear the path for him a little bit from a rotation standpoint or figure out his future, get it more settled than it has been?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think the good and bad of the situation with Moses is, first he's improved, he's gotten a lot better, and on top of it I think any issues with him playing, frankly, is a result of our depth, which is also a good thing. But in the end, you're right, he hasn't probably played as much as we would like and there hasn't been a clear enough path. So that will be something we'll look at. I think it's really important coming into year four for him that there is some reasonable playing time available for him where he can impact our team and be out there and continue to improve and I think that's a fair thing.

Q. You've seen 83 games now. Knowing what you lack, knowing how the West is stacked up, in hindsight, could you have improved this seem at the deadline, was there something that was out there that might have helped like looking back on it?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: I think knowing what I know now there is not anything on the table that I would have done or gone through with. I think it was good to see this team out. I think one of the best things about this year, frankly, is there were no catastrophic injuries. There's no, Hey, Steph only played 40 games, what would this team be like without him. Things like that. We know clearly what this team was, it wasn't good enough, and so there's no doubt about that. There's no "what ifs" if we had made a move at the deadline, well maybe that wasn't the right move, what if we had kept this guy or that guy. We answered all those questions and so now we can move forward with clarity. But going back on it, no, I feel good about this team. We really put a lot into it before the season started and a lot of thought. I thought it could play multiple ways, pretty versatile defensively, offensively. Did we do those throughout the year, no, but to be able to see that out after the deadline I thought was important. That's what I, the feedback I got from the players, the coaching staff. And, frankly, we were 27-12, you know, the last half of the season. So, I'm good with how, you know, we went after the deadline, just don't like maybe the earlier part of the season that got us too far behind that we couldn't make up.

Q. Kind of I guess following up on that then moving into this off-season what do you think your biggest roster needs are, what did you guys really look at the season?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I mean, look, like I said, we got

to get better in a lot of areas, but the ones that I think immediately jump off the page is defensively we got to be better. This is an organization, a team that when we've been really good and won championships it's been mostly with defense, and then you got some great exciting offensive moments that everybody thinks about, but it's really the defense that's been the core of the thing. So, improving defensively within, getting better defensive players, and then from there, you know, I think as Steph and Draymond and Klay, those guys kind of age, shooting's important, shooting's important in this League, it's important to have guys that can shoot around them, so I think addressing that will always be a thing. But I think there's -- and then honestly size. Size -- and not necessarily at the center position, but positional size across the board, which has been a strong point of the teams here, whether it's shooting guard, wings, small forwards, whatever it is, always had good size and length. So like to always keep that in mind and address that. But those are probably the biggest areas that I'm thinking about right now.

Q. You mentioned shooting, how much, this season there wasn't like a consistent secondary scorer that could you consistently rely on. Do you think that was an issue kind of throughout the year?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, sure, I think so. I think a lot fell on Steph's shoulders. I think he would probably tell you that, and you could notice it in the wear it took on him. In fact, really with some of his decision making at times too, and it's just a lot for him to burden. We've got to find a way to help him out on that. Frankly, I think we've got some talent on the roster that can do that, and maybe we got to just be a little bit better about bringing that out. So, maybe there's some improvements from externally, but I think we have some ways internally to do that.

Q. After one year in this job what's something you wish you knew last year you'll take into next year?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Oh, boy, great question. You know, I think with this thing as the season goes along you put together the best roster you can, you try and manage it, you go through it and then you just find yourself just sitting there observing, feeling like a fan. There's times where there's just not much you can do, good or bad. But honestly, I, you know, I've been working here for a few years and it's not like a surprise. I don't think there was anything that surprised me. Were there some things that were completely off the radar that happened between maybe Draymond's suspension or what happened with Deki, those types of things, yeah, hopefully those things don't ever happen again. But they were learning moments and situations that we probably, you know, that wasn't

expecting.

Q. What kind of presence in your mind is the managing of these extra years, these, maybe the end years of a dynasty and how much are you thinking, okay, let's just maintain these guys and, as Draymond said, do right by them for what they have done; and how much is it, you know what, at some point you're going to need a roster that is past those guys. Maybe, you know, not for a while, but how much of a weight is that, how much of a responsibility is that for you.

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think it's certainly a responsibility, just because this team and organization means so much to the Bay Area. So you can feel you know what it means to the fans and even the people within the organization, the players. But it's kind of a cool, it's a cool opportunity. Like, normally you're trying to build a team from the start up and there's an ascension and all this, this is a little bit different. So, I relish the challenge. By the way, those guys aging out, like it's Steph Curry, it's Draymond Green it's Klay Thompson, those guys are great guys to go out with. So, and they're really, they're still good at basketball. So I think it's a manageable thing. Is it challenging, yes, but I do, I relish it because it's unique and I think it's somewhat do able, so we'll see what happens.

Q. You touched on Deki and that was actually on my mind, too, just how Steve and your coaching staff and support staff navigated that, the unthinkable for everybody. Steve also tried so many different rotations this season and starting lineups and got Trayce such good experience. How did he navigate that with support from everybody else too?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I mean Steve's masterful at that stuff. The Deki thing was new for everybody, so I can't say he was quite very experienced with that, but he handled it masterfully. It's a lot. A NBA season is a lot to navigate. I think coming into it the biggest thing our group wanted to push and focus on was our connectivity and frankly I thought we were great in that area. That showed up with the stuff with Deki, the stuff with Draymond, some just unthinkable losses that we had on the court with blowing big leads or having games in hand that we gave up, this group never wavered, they stuck together, I just thought in the end we came up short like from a basketball standpoint, too many mistakes, just not enough discipline, the small things, getting back on defense, not turn the ball over, not fouling. Those things did us in and we're sitting here today with a season ended because of it.

Q. Steve said something the other night that kind of stuck out. He said that he needs to be better, specifically talking about the offense, getting the

offense into more rhythm and more flow. How do you think he was over the course of this season, obviously off the court stuff was one thing, but on the court, how do you think that went?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think it went well. I mean that's I think, hopefully that's, that shows in the contract extension we gave him. I think if there's anything I look back on and think about and question is I think we built this team with a lot of depth in mind because some of our players on the roster are older, we've had some injuries, so you want to be able to survive those types of things. And, frankly, we had great health this year, and because of it, it kind of created a log jam with minutes and rotations, and maybe that made it difficult on Steve and the coaching staff at times. I have to look back at it, evaluate it, not sure that the answer is to go the other way and have more of a pecking order and less depth, because if you get hurt you're in trouble. But I thought overall Steve had another really good year, but I think we've almost, in some ways, not to take away from the basketball part, but we value him in the way he can manage a team throughout the season and hold a team together. I mean, man, we had some tough stuff go on and like I said, this group never wavered.

Q. When you talk about what you just said, this team never wavered, they were healthy all season long, and you mentioned size is needed, you said not necessarily at the center position, but you're going up against guys like Sabonis, AD, Jokic in the Western Conference, is size not a remedy, size inside at the center position not a remedy for the troubles defensively that you kind of mentioned there? And I have a follow-up after.

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I mean, look, that helps, if you have the type of size that can combat those specific players who are like All-NBA Hall of Fame players. Though to me the worst thing you can do is try and just bring in a tall guy and say, Hey, go guard Jokic. That's not the answer. So we try and do -- we try and beat it with speed, with quickness, with smarts, those types of things, and it's been pretty successful here. But overall, like, yeah, if we can find somebody that's 7'-3" and highly skilled and can play both ends of the floor, like sign me up. But those guys aren't really growing on trees.

Q. The follow-up, being that the young -- the League is getting younger. Obviously guys like JK really helped you guys to speed up the game. Is there any emphasis on getting some more athleticism, younger, quicker guys to help to build around, of course, Steph?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, for sure. I think in this modern NBA the game is played so fast and we got to be able to

play that way. We struggled this year in transition, both ways. Defensively, couldn't get back, you know, which is a speed, athleticism, effort thing. Then, going the other way, we didn't create a lot of turnovers and were unable to get out in transition and use our athleticism with Wiggins and JK, GP, those guys. So, we got to solve that, we got to be better both ways in transition. And we'll look to do that. Like I said before, not only like free agency and draft and trades, but like, you know, can our guys that we have now be better at that and I think it's doable.

Q. Just overall assessing the landscape of the West, how close do you feel like you guys are to closing that gap with some of the top teams?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I mean I think we still got really good players. We got good young players. For me, we're closer to the top than we are the bottom, even though we finished 10th in the standings. You know, that's kind of the way I see it, but that, look, that can change next year will be tough. The teams that didn't make the playoffs this year you're looking on outside in with Houston, Memphis, San Antonio, I don't see a way for those teams to get worse, they're only going to get better. And this is a tough conference and this is why we got to improve we got to get a lot better too.

Q. Kuminga and Moses obviously made significant steps of progress this year, but you also got big contributions from Brandin and Trayce. Overall, how encouraged are you by that young core that you have on the roster?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think we're excited about it, to have four young players that we think can really play. A little of it now is finding how it all works together and getting them the appropriate time and making sure that they can properly impact winning, but I feel a lot better about that group and just our overall direction of the team sitting here today than I did a year ago. And a lot of that is, frankly, because of the, you know, having Brandin and Trayce, a couple more players that make sense.

Q. When you talk about developing a better roster and being better than this year what does that necessarily entail? Do you start looking at the playoffs now, do you go back and look at games that you felt like other teams competed better, when you talk about the center, obviously Kevon lost minutes and lost kind of like his motivation there a little bit. When you're looking at new talent and you're talking to Joe, at what point are you like, this is kind of most important, let's work this first and then get to everything else later?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think that's kind of what we're

going through now, kind of postmortem on the season evaluating everything and really identifying the areas that we have to be better in, then how can we get better. Is that, you know, working with our current players or is it something that we need from the outside. So kind of taking all those things into account and evaluating, making the decisions, that's the way that we look at it.

Q. How would you assess your ability to make whatever tough decisions you have to make coming up here? Is this difficult for you? Do you feel like your decades in the NBA and around NBA life makes it a little bit easier to pull the trigger on something that is probably going to be difficult to do?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I mean, I think I probably operate off the saying there's never a bad time to make a good decision. So, doesn't mean it's not tough and you stir over it, but my job is to have the best interests of this franchise and the direction of this franchise and when I make a decision or we make a decision. So, that's what I'm going to do.

Q. Chris has a very flexible contract situation and you guys have also expressed maybe wanting him back. How do you view his future and then just how do the financials of it all kind of complicate that?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I mean, I think overall I was really pleased with Chris having him on this team this year what he gave us in the locker room, on the court, off the court. I think admittedly he probably wished he had a larger role and could help the team a little bit more, but I think moving forward because of his production and the guy can still do it and what he means to winning and all that stuff, we certainly have interest in bringing him back. But like the puzzle stuff, we got to look at and figure out and see and there's definitely a viable path to do that, but we're not really down the road yet of like specifically what we can and can't do.

Q. You referenced being closer to the top than the bottom of the West. Certainly that makes sense when you look at the second half, 27-12. It doesn't make sense when you look at the other night. As Steve said, you guys are kind of overwhelmed physically. Was that sort of jarring to see the way, not just that you lost, but the way you lost, and how does that sort of color your view going into the off-season?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, honestly, not a lot. I don't take that game into consideration too much. I just, that was the worst game we played all year. Give credit to Sacramento, they did a great job, but I watched this team for 82 games. I mean, the amount of times that we've been ran off the

court, very few. I think there were a couple home games in January, obviously the Boston game, where that was a different scenario. But that was a game last night where I think or the other night where you got to be careful of overreacting to how it went. I don't think that represented our team on the whole for the season. But that being said, it kind of put the stamp on what the reality of this year was. So here we are and I would say going into that game, win or lose, no matter how it happened, I knew we had to get better.

Q. Steve said the other night, earlier this season, actually, that they needed to really kind of get the best out of the athletic guys like Wiggins and JK and Gary. And obviously Wiggins missed a few games. JK came along. Gary missed a bunch of games here and there. How do you look at especially Gary and Wiggins and what they can give you going forward given situations that they're in?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think those are the type of players you need on both ends, that can defend, they can do stuff offensively, they can finish at the rim, they have the athleticism, so we need those types of guys and we need them to, we need to bring the most out of their talent. That's really important. I thought there were times this year where, yeah, they struggled individually, and then we -- but I think of it as like a two-way street, where we got to be better at helping them. I think those are guys that if we're talking about helping Steph and taking a load off him, those are guys moving forward that can do that offensively and we got to find ways to do that.

Q. We didn't get to talk to Steph yesterday, but what was your message to him in the end of season exit interview and what did he want to get across to you?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: I don't think there was any two-way messaging, it was just a discussion, dialog of how the season went. What we need to do to get better. Where he's at, hearing from him after 83 games and being 36 years old, where he's at. I think he's in a really good place and I think he's a player we'll continue to lean on, both with his leadership and his play and man, that guys's as resilient as they come. My biggest thing was I'm disappointed for you, for Draymond, our veteran guys, as well as our younger guys, that you won't be able to play in the post-season. Like, that's what everybody wants to see, not only here in the Bay Area, but frankly, around the world, to see those guys compete at the highest level. So for them not to be able to do that is really disappointing. I feel for them. It is what it is. It's our own undoing and we got to live with it.

Q. Then in terms of, you mentioned some internal

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options of possibly taking some burden off of him. How much of that needs to come with a scheme change rather than players developing?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think that's a good question, maybe a little bit more pointed to Steve, but I think that's something that he'll look at and be open to. I thought we did some stuff this year that changed differently from what we have done in the past to help those guys and I think we can do more of it. But, yeah, I think that's something we'll look at and I think everything's on the table in terms of how we play, how we want to do things, when you have a couple years, you know, we've missed the playoffs three of the last five years, so it's fair to evaluate and make changes to things.

Q. Actually as a follow-up to what you just said there, to just summarize the emotion in the front office right now, given what you said about the consideration of the last game and how they lost, what you've said about having the pieces here, is there an overarching emotion that something has to change in this off-season for next season, or something drastic or no?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think the overarching emotion right now is disappointment. We're still sort of settling in on what happened. But on the whole we knew this season no matter how long it went along was going to end at some point probably disappointing us. So, not a shocking surprise. But I think, as far as, again, what we need to do is just, it's pretty straightforward, it's to get better. I think that presents a really good challenge for everybody. Whether it's the players, the front office, the coaches, the performance staff, like everybody rowing in the same direction and figuring it out.

Q. I just wanted to get more clarity on the financial aspect of the equation, because you want to go get better, but also at this point sounding like you guys need to trim salary. How do you decide, well, this is worth paying this amount because we're going to be a playoff team, whereas, like you just paid 400 million not for a playoff team, like, I guess, talk me through the mindset with the money right now and how needed it is to trim regardless of the moves available?

MIKE DUNLEAVY: Yeah, I think the way we'll look at it is seeing what we can do, what's out there. Seeing what we project of the guys we have on our roster, how they can improve. Talking through it with Steve and what he's looking to do to change things, and really getting a hard look at like, okay, this is where we can be. Then to go to Joe with my recommendation of what the appropriate spend is on all that. That's what it's going to come down to

and, frankly, it's probably not going to happen next week or next month, it's like a lot of this stuff leads up to the draft and right up to the bell of free agency. So there may not be a lot of conclusions and solutions in the short-term, but that's what we'll lead up to.

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