

Golden State Warriors Media Conference

Thursday, September 26, 2024
San Francisco, California, USA

Steve Kerr

Media Conference



Q. What are your early impressions of the group and what this group can be?

STEVE KERR: I'm really excited. I just feel good about the energy in the building, the talent. We've added some good players. Our younger players are making big strides. Our older players are excited. Wiggs looks fantastic. Steph and Draymond are here and ready to roll. There's a good vibe for sure.

I think what we're going to have to figure out is combinations. We've got a lot of good players, and I think you could make the argument we've got 12 or 13 guys that could all be in the rotation, so we've got to figure out how to put those groups together, but I'm confident we'll be able to do so.

Q. Andrew was the first guy I was going to ask you about. You just brought up he looks fantastic. Mike said he could almost sense his hunger. Where are you seeing that specifically from Andrew?

STEVE KERR: Well, I've only seen him the last couple days since he got back in town, but number one, he looks physically really fit. I think he also looks -- just speaking with him, he sounds very motivated. He's very much at peace.

I think he's in a place where he knows the last couple years have been tough for a lot of reasons, and I think he's primed to get back to where he was a couple years ago.

He's at the age where he's right in his physical prime, and we've seen him do it. He helped us win a championship.

I'm expecting a big year from Wiggs. I think there's also a void that is left by Klay's absence that we need to fill. That's a lot of points to score.

But it also means we have to rethink how we're doing things, and Wiggs will be featured for sure. He's a guy who's proven. He's a 20-point-a-night guy, and we're going to be relying on him heavily.

Q. To follow up on the question about your depth and your answer about 12 or 13 players, in the past you've been pretty open about the fact that you felt that way about some of your prior teams. It's been a struggle at times for you to get everybody involved, keep everybody happy and also find the right combinations quickly enough in season to basically have the record you guys want to have. How much urgency do you put on having that ready to go much quicker than maybe it was able to be done in the last couple of years?

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I think there's always extenuating circumstances. You've got -- sometimes you have the age and inexperience of players. Sometimes you have health issues. Last year Draymond missed all of camp, which was tough for us.

I just think every year is a little different and you have to figure out your circumstances and figure out your lineups.

What I like about the guys we signed, De'Anthony, Kyle and Buddy, I think they all fit a lot of lineups. They're the kind of players that can thrive with different groups of players around them.

I think they were all really good signings and designed to help us get deeper but also to help us be able to play more different combinations.

Q. You enter camp, how many starting spots do you feel like are securely known at this point?

STEVE KERR: Yeah, great question. I'm leaving that kind of up in the air. I feel pretty confident I might start Steph probably, if he earns it. What I love about this camp is that we do have spots available. We've got a lot of guys who have started a lot of games.

Last year Wiggs, J.K., Draymond, Trayce, some combination of those, BP started some games, De'Anthony, these guys have all -- Buddy has been a starter most of his career. It's the easiest thing for me to do is just to tell the guys we've got starting spots available. That doesn't mean I'm going to say how many to you or to



them.

I think you just put it out there, compete, go play your best, and may the best man win.

Q. Mike said top five, six defense is the goal or almost like the requirement. It seems like you've built the roster to try to boost that level. Are you entering camp wanting to be a defense-first team?

STEVE KERR: Yeah, for sure. Our transition defense fell off the map last year. A huge emphasis in camp will be to shore that up.

We do have, I think, better personnel this year to become a better defensive team, barring injury and that kind of stuff. But really excited about having Gary Payton healthy. I think he's one of the most impactful defenders in the league. Kyle and De'Anthony in particular have been excellent two-way players. Trayce is a year older. Draymond remains one of the best defenders in the league.

I agree with Mike. I think traditionally we've been a top 10 defense. I just want to get back to being really good at that end knowing we can count on our ability to get stops, whatever the ranking is.

Q. Mike also mentioned transition offense that this team has not been great at. Can you just say, hey, we've just got to finish better? How do you become a better transition offense?

STEVE KERR: I think there's a mentality that we have to reach, and it's going to be a huge part of the trip to Hawai'i and the next few weeks is shifting our mentality, understanding the change of possession. The first guy who moves wins, and we were off on the second guy last year. We were a very reactionary transition team in both directions.

On offense, our problem was turnovers. We turned it over too often. We've got to improve our transition spacing. We'll work on all that stuff in camp. We've got to improve our decision making. Hopefully that comes with some maturity for our younger players but also some high-IQ basketball from our newer players. Steph and Draymond, they've got to lead the charge on that in that regard.

As a coaching staff, we have to lay that out there exactly what this means to improve in transition both directions. There will be a lot of drill work that goes into that.

Q. On that note, what did you learn from coaching last year about connecting with the young players and

bringing them into the fold while you mesh that with the vets who started this run nine years ago?

STEVE KERR: I mean, it's all part of it. Every roster is different. Every year is different. So you have to embrace everybody and help them get better and make sure everybody feels part of what you're working on, and then it's the players' job to be all in.

That's not easy in an environment, in a business where you get traded and cut and all that stuff.

We try to provide a really good environment where players know they can get better and where they feel welcome and where the older players welcome the younger players and help them get up to speed. It's all part of the plan. Some years it works better than others.

As a coach, it's my job to connect with every one of these guys for sure.

Q. If all goes well, Andrew regains his form, you have reasonable health, what's a realistic expectation for this team? How good can this team be?

STEVE KERR: You know, it's a good question. It's a hard one to answer because a year ago we won 46 games. We didn't make the Playoffs. The year before we won 44, we made the conference semis. So win total, I'm not sure you can even guess what it's going to take. We do know the west is loaded. Memphis is going to be better. Houston is going to be better, San Antonio. You can go up and line the down. Oklahoma City is loaded. Denver still is Denver.

You can go up and down the list of the teams in the west. Everyone is going to be really good.

I think we're going to be really good. I believe in this team, and I'm excited for our prospects. But we have to go play, and it would be a disservice to our team if I said I want to win X amount of games or I want to get this far. We've just got to go out and be the best team we can be.

Q. You've got a lot of new faces, obviously, and it felt like at times last year you were playing different systems or different ways to kind of fit the personnel that you had on the floor. Is there any goal to get back to playing the style that you guys consistently played prior with some of the new pieces --

STEVE KERR: I think what we never want to give up is our values as a team. We believe in ball movement. When you play the Warriors, you know the ball is going to move. That's not going to change.



But we also have to adapt to our personnel. I think where I can do better is simplifying some of the actions that we run so that the players know exactly what they're doing and not have too many options for them.

So finding that balance where we can maintain our identity but simplify things and make it a little cleaner, that's the challenge.

Q. That system of being a little more complex and optioned I think is part of --

STEVE KERR: For sure.

Q. -- your success, right?

STEVE KERR: Yeah.

Q. Do you feel like you could have the same success in a simpler system?

STEVE KERR: Well, to compare the team now to the one from six years ago is not fair. That was one of the all-time great rosters. We were just loaded. So we have to adapt. We have some very good players now.

But we don't have an all-time great roster like we did.

It's up to us as a staff to figure out what that means. How can we get the most out of this group and how can we best pair the values that we have in terms of ball movement and pace with the personnel that we have.

Q. In terms of needing to find combinations and having 12, 13 guys who can play, that's kind of in a way what you dealt with with Team USA in some ways. Are there things that you learned or things that can be taken away from your experience in Paris that can be brought to this team?

STEVE KERR: Oh, yeah. That's part of the experience with Team USA is you're around the best coaches, best players. So there's lots of little stuff, drills that we ran that I'll implement here, thoughts from players.

But the competition is so different. It's six weeks you're together versus eight months in the NBA. It's a very different endeavor. Some things you can't take anything from, but as far as learning from some of the best coaches and players out there, there's definitely a lot to take from that.

Q. We know the season that Draymond had last year. What's the communication been like with him this

off-season, and what is you guys' level of trust with him?

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I just talked to him just a few minutes ago before I came up here, and it's great to see him. I didn't see much of him. I saw him in Paris briefly. But we always give Draymond a lot of space in the summer. He's excited for the season. I thought he had a good year last year when he was on the floor.

But obviously we missed him during the suspension, and so we've got to do everything we can to help Draymond have another good year but make sure this team is on the right path for all 82 games.

Q. You mentioned Hawai'i. I know this has been in the works for a while. You didn't say specifically Hawai'i for this roster, but are there things you can do when the camp is so out there, you have the beach, whatever? Can this be a different kind of training camp?

STEVE KERR: I really want to instill grit and toughness and nothing can define that more than Mai Tais and sunsets and luaus. I don't even know how this came up. I know it's been talked about in the past. I think the Clippers have been doing it for a while, and they asked us if we'd be interested.

I love it. I think it's a great idea. The families will come. Players -- just to change the vibe. We've done it so many years in a row here, at Chase or at Oracle. Sometimes going away for camp is really valuable because you bond, you get -- you're isolated in the gym. You're in a beautiful spot in Hawai'i, so you're also getting to enjoy yourself with your family, with your teammates.

I'm excited. I think it's a great idea, and I think it'll be really good for us.

Q. Will you surf?

STEVE KERR: Probably not, but I'd like to.

Q. Basketball is number one for Steph but he does so much outside of the game whether it's TV or golf or business investments. What have you seen from him and the way he balances all those demands on his time?

STEVE KERR: Steph is -- he loves life so much. He wakes up excited. He doesn't sleep that much because I think he's so excited to wake up and face the day, and you'll notice that all of his endeavors are very creative and thoughtful, and they're right up his alley. Helping start the

golf program at Howard, I don't know if there's anybody who's done something more personally connected in terms of a project than that would be for Steph because it includes everything that he believes in, not only the game but the connection socially, the economic advantages that you have if you can play golf. He understands all this stuff, and then he puts it together, and he makes it happen. It's incredible to watch.

He does a million things because he genuinely cares, and he's connected, and he loves doing them.

It's our job every March to tell him, all right, now you've got to stop. It's literally the same time every year where, all right, no more photo shoots. You've got to give yourself some rest and some sleep. He laughs and he agrees. He doesn't plan anything from like March on.

He's found a way to make it work, obviously, and he's impacted so many people's lives, both on and off the court. It's pretty remarkable to watch.

Q. Do you feel like in the eyes of others going into the season that a lot of people will be underestimating your team?

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I do think that we've been forgotten about a little bit. It makes sense where we are. We didn't make the Playoffs last year. That's how it works.

But I'm excited. I think we were pretty good last year, and if you win 46, that means something. Normally that's a 5 or 6 seed in the Playoffs.

I still think we're really good. We'll miss Chris and Klay, but it also opens up an opportunity to maybe play a little bit differently. It opens up a void for other guys to fill in where they can lift their games up, and I don't see any reason why we can't improve on last year's team and have a great season, and then you roll the dice from there. You don't know what happens with the rest of the league.

But if we control our team and our destiny and be the best team we can be, I think good things can happen.

Q. You're the third longest tenured coach in the NBA. There are eight new coaches this year. Are you kind of disappointed as a coach at how quickly your counterparts are replaced even after a good season?

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I think I'm very lucky, obviously. The coaches that last the longest are the ones who get attached to Steph Curry or someone like that. It's very rare in this business to stay longer than a few years. It's kind of what we all sign up for.

I tell our players all the time that they can get traded and injured and all that stuff, and some of that applies to coaches, too. We're in big business. There's big money involved.

Of course every coach would like to see more stability in the profession, but it is what it is. This is what we've chosen.

Q. I was wondering when was the last time you were in Hawai'i, and are you going to make this a business-only kind of a trip?

STEVE KERR: Great question. I've been to Hawai'i many times over the years, and I love coming to the islands. I want to say two years ago. So looking forward to it. It's going to be fun.

Q. What was the reason for that two years ago, because I know the team wasn't here, was it?

STEVE KERR: No, no. My family and I have frequently come to Hawai'i for vacation.

Q. Do you see a trip to the islands as -- even though you are coming off the off-season, as a nice way to ease into the year and to the grind?

STEVE KERR: I think the way I'm looking at it is we're not trying to ease into the year so much. We want to get off to a good start. We want to have a great training camp. So the way I'm looking at it is more we are doing something different. We're shaking up our routine. We're having training camp in one of the most beautiful places on earth.

I believe in a good work-life balance, so we're going to find that in Hawai'i. We're going to have a great time, but we are going to work really, really hard, too. Probably no better place for it than Hawai'i. So we're excited about it.

Q. Obviously first year head J.J. Redick. You were in a similar position about a decade ago. What did you learn or what are the biggest lessons you took away from that first season, and what advice would you give to someone in that position like J.J.?

STEVE KERR: Well, I think what I learned was you don't have nearly as much time as you need. You come in with a plan. You want to go over 10 things. The players are ready to leave after four of them.

If you think you can keep them on the floor for six more, you're wasting your time.

What I learned was really to try to be efficient in practice and get the most important things in and really connect with the players, just to get on the same page. I know J.J. is going to do a great job. He's smart as hell. He's played in the league. I know what all these guys go through. He's very close with his own playing career. It's only been a couple of years.

He'll do a great job of connecting with the group and he'll find his way in terms of planning practices and being efficient with them and all that. But yeah, he's got a lot of great qualities that a good coach needs.

Q. Similar to you, I know you emphasize having experience on your staff with your assistants. He also did the same, especially hiring Nick McMillan, Scott Brooks. How did that benefit you? I know there are probably more ways you can describe it, but how did you feel like that benefitted you the most, especially your first year, your first training camp, your first couple months?

STEVE KERR: Well, he can lean on those guys just like I leaned on Ron Adams and Alvin Gentry for all the little details. As a player you just show up to practice, you do whatever the coaches say. It's a lot different when you become the coach and it's your job to plan it out. But Nate and Scott have been doing this forever. They'll help J.J. with kind of the rhythm of it all and the routine of practice, and that's the idea. You surround yourself with really smart people and learn from them and grow together.

It sounds to me like they've got a pretty good setup there.

Q. You guys also shared the broadcast experience before becoming a coach. You were an executive as well in Phoenix before going to coaching. Is there anything you did or you can take away from the broadcast experience and apply it to coaching even though obviously they're very separate jobs?

STEVE KERR: Well, the benefit of the broadcasting gig is that you're around all the different teams and coaches all the time, so you're seeing different styles. You're picking the brains of the coaches.

I know I brought a lot of ideas that I learned from other coaches who I met through broadcasting games.

J.J., as I said, he's a really smart guy. He's a sponge. He's been around the game at a lot of different levels, and the broadcasting level, I think it's a big help. You really get a good glimpse into a lot of teams and how they go about their business.

Q. As I'm sure you heard, the A's are leaving Oakland. Tonight is the last game. Any thoughts on that?

STEVE KERR: Well, I'll miss having the A's here in the Bay. They've got an amazing history here. I remember as a kid growing up in LA watching the A's and the Dodgers in the World Series in 1974. There's so much history here. Sad to see the A's go and sad for the fans.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports