

# LA Clippers Media Conference

Wednesday, September 27, 2023  
Los Angeles, California, USA

## Lawrence Frank

### Press Conference



#### **Q. What do you feel going into camp just a few days away and what you guys did in the off-season?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, very, very excited. I think, look, obviously you guys know the drill for every team going into camp. There's an excitement. You always look at why is this off-season different than prior off-seasons.

One of the things that stands out is just I think we all have something to prove. I think we were disappointed with how the season ended, and I think the off-season is a great time for reflection that leads to great personal development and professional development, and we've had a great spirit and energy around the group, very competitive in terms of how they approach their work, whether it's in the performance room or on the court.

There's a seriousness to our approach, and I think it's not about the talk ultimately for us. It's about the daily habits and how we perform.

But just in terms of the process itself, that every day matters, every rep matters, every game matters. We're just starting it, but I've been very impressed with the approach of our guys.

#### **Q. Kawhi and PG will both be available for camp?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yes, both are fully healthy. I think both have had extremely productive off-seasons, and obviously our two best players, and totally invested in doing special things for the Clippers. They show it with their actions.

I think we're really excited that they're both fully healthy and will be full participants in camp.

#### **Q. Kawhi obviously had a much tougher rehab with the ACL as far as coming back. Is there expected to be a strong limitation on him at all as the season starts up? What are you looking at as far as his workload?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think, look, he's fully healthy, so I think he's going to attack everything. It was such a shame that he got injured at the worst possible time. You guys know because you follow us every day, but his last 35 games he was on an unbelievable tear, and what he did in Game 1, let alone in Game 2 with a torn meniscus, pretty incredible.

We just need and he just needs some good fortune. The great thing about how he approaches his craft, he leaves no stone unturned. He's extremely passionate and loves what he does. He's all about the work.

That's why when he had to deal -- he really dealt with three separate injuries last year. You feel horrible for him. You feel horrible for the team. You feel horrible for the fans. But in terms of trying to focus on what you can control, and he tries to control all the controllables, and he just had some misfortune and luck, but I think the encouraging thing is after he sprained his ankle, he basically played out -- he only missed -- he never missed more than one game in a row.

We're very hopeful, and knock on wood, he's going to have a very, very healthy year because when he plays, he's one of the best players in the world.

#### **Q. In the spring you talked about taking the regular season more seriously. The new player participation policy, how do you feel like all that will go into how often you can have your guys available this year, the plan to have them available as often as possible?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, look, when our guys are healthy, they play. That's the bottom line. This isn't -- as you know, there's a difference between being injured and the, quote-unquote, load management. Kawhi and PG, those guys, they play when they're healthy. When they're unhealthy, then they don't play, no different than anything else.

I think it's just having a little bit better fortune, so the policy in itself, what it's saying is healthy players should play, and we totally subscribe to that.

#### **Q. When you look at where you're at with Kawhi and Paul, you said those guys have been great partners as**



**far as potential extension talks back in June. How have those conversations progressed, and what's your perspective on how you're trying to build the team along that?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, so it's still the same. We're still trying to maximize Kawhi and PG's window and take advantage of it.

We've had, since the timing was right, each guy, obviously they were extension eligible different dates, but we've had consistent ongoing conversations with both them and their representatives, and at the appropriate time we're hopeful that they'll remain Clippers.

I think it's a byproduct of our players and our staff, that hopefully we've created an environment where not only guys want to come, they want to stay, and we have a pretty good track record of being able to keep guys, so we'll just -- it'll be a process, and we'll just be candid with each other, but we're hopeful that we can continue to build around those guys and they'll remain Clippers.

**Q. How, if any, would you characterize the similarities and differences between where they are right now versus where they were December 2020 when it was the same situation?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think, look, when healthy, they're two of the best two-way players in the world, and the key is if we can get some good fortune and they're able to stay healthy, I think we can show ultimately kind of the vision of the group and how good we can be.

**Q. To build off that, this off-season obviously they've been extension eligible for several weeks and it didn't happen and Ty didn't get the deal he was seeking, do you think you guys are sending a message of not rushing into long-term deals with those pillars?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: No. One, I think the extension conversation in terms of the specifics obviously are kept behind closed doors, but no, not at all.

I think ultimately at the end of the day -- forget contracts. I think all of us feel a tremendous responsibility and indebtedness to Steve, to our fans, to the fellow people we work with, to make sure that we're able to perform and give our best.

In terms of with T-Lue, he has two years, so we love T-Lue. We want T-Lue to be coach here for a long time. He's one of the elite coaches in this league, and there's always a timing for things like that. PG and Kawhi, we have very, very candid conversations in terms of the goal is to keep

them as Clippers.

So it's not a warning shot, but I think all of us, me included, you feel a tremendous amount of responsibility and you take ownership for your piece of the pie, so to speak, of how we each can do better for each other and ultimately for all our fans.

**Q. There was a report earlier this off-season about a trade that was close to maybe sending out Marcus and bringing back some other pieces. Obviously that didn't happen. When something like that happens, where do things stand right now with you guys and Marcus after something like that becomes so public?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think with all those things the key is just being very candid, open, honest, no bullshit, and just share the dialogue. We have grown men here. We're one of the older teams in the league. I view that oftentimes as a positive, is that you can have very mature, grown-up talks.

Everyone understands the business of the NBA, and I think if there's no bullshit and everyone is just honest about it, you may not like the answers, but you respect that you're getting the truth from each other.

I've communicated with Marcus throughout the entire off-season.

**Q. Going forward, it seems like everybody is kind of on the same page now, and he's ready to go to come into training camp?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah. Marcus gets the business. He's super excited. He, like everyone else, as an individual and as a team, want to be able to perform at a higher level, and he's had a terrific off-season. Marcus, like anyone else, we're expecting our group to make the total investment like we know we need to.

**Q. On PG, just to be clear, you said the conversations are going on, but if it doesn't happen before the season starts, is it a possibility they could be extended during the season?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, so basically the way that -- per the CBA, they can be extended up to June 30th. Really the CBA minutiae is prior to call it the first regular season game, you can deal with their option where they can opt in and extend. Any deal after that, they would have to opt out and extend. But long story short, you can have these conversations all the way until June 30th.

**Q. I know some teams, they prefer to get it done**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**before the season starts and then they say we'll table it until the off-season.**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, some of those conversations where those extensions can only be done prior, this isn't the case.

**Q. You guys had a deal during the season you brought in Eric, sent down Luke. Eric only played 20 something games for you guys before you decided to move on. What was the process there given you had such a valuable guy in Luke, letting Eric go after 20-something games?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, well, there's a lot of variables with it. When we saw Eric, if you remember the timing, we didn't know that Russ would be traded and then waived. So with Eric we saw someone who could play both on and off the ball and would be a terrific complement to Kawhi and PG just because of his shot range, his ability to guard up. He had enough ball skills where he could help offload some of the ball handling responsibilities.

Well, what happened? Then all of a sudden Russ becomes on the market, fills a very, very valuable role, and then we never really saw -- you had a very, very small sample of Eric playing with Kawhi and PG. The ability to bring back Russ, obviously Eric -- from a financial standpoint, it was a great thing working for Steve, he never gives us financial limitations, but some things just from a basketball sense, we felt with the guys we have that they were ready to fill some of the things we were asking Eric to do. It's a huge tax savings, and Russ was really just knowing that we had Russ, it kind of would change Eric's role and just felt it was best for the team.

**Q. Were there conversations at all about maybe retaining him and moving somewhere down the line at all?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Well, yeah. Now, the thing is he had a guarantee date. So with those things you explore all those options and you work -- kind of to your point, you work in conjunction with the player and their representation. But if there's no deals prior to the guarantee date, then you have to make a decision.

**Q. What was the calculus behind trading for K.J.?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: The way we looked at our team is there were certain holes we wanted to address and thought in the front court we need to get younger and more athletic. K.J. has been a target of ours for the last two years, and it was on going dialogue with Houston and just because of the timing of some of the moves they were making, we felt

really, really fortunate to get K.J.

He gives us -- even though he's, whatever, 6'6", he gives us a vertical threat. He, again, buys into just our team-building philosophy of multiple position defender, and we need some juice.

I think the youth that he brings and the energy, and at his age to be able to have the number of NBA games under his belt is huge. It doesn't hurt that his dad is one of my all-time favorite dudes -- no, that had nothing to do with it, but K.J. we're really excited and encouraged to see what K.J. can bring to our team because I think he brings a little bit different dynamic because in theory, again, T-Lue understands better than anyone how to use different combination. You can play him as a small ball 5, you can play him at 4, you can do a bunch of different things with him.

**Q. If I can, because of the new CBA ramifications, trading for K.J. did it feel like one of the last times in unique ways you could add talent without really getting strapped by the new CBA, so to speak, because of what's in it?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I mean, I think it's potentially -- that didn't go as much I'd say into the K.J. move in terms of CBA implications, but there will be other things that you have to look at because once the second April -- really not this year but the following year, what that means. It's not just how punitive it is financially, it's how it limits your ability just from a strategic standpoint, your inability to take on money and it's got to be dollar for dollar, the aggregation rules, the fact that you no longer have your exception.

There's a lot of limiters with it that if you're going to live in the second apron and the fact that you're -- you're picking it frozen if you're in it two years of five, so it's very punitive. There will be moves, I think, every team will make in terms of how they view the new CBA and the impact.

**Q. Have you had to pivot on how you look down the road, talk about extensions and free agency? Have you had to change your line of thinking at all, and how does this affect you down the road going forward and trying to add a team to keep a team together?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think with it, what you have to look at is our commitment to Steve, to our fans, and quite frankly Kawhi and PG and our team is every year we're going to do our best to position ourselves to compete for a championship. When you have to start to project out and you're looking at, okay, what does 2025 look like and 2026 and '27, you have to factor in all those things from a team-building standpoint to make sure that you can best

position yourself where you're competing for a championship.

With that being said, you're trying to maximize each and every year. We will look again this year, how can we maximize this group.

**Q. (Indiscernible) how does that player participation rule (indiscernible)?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think with it is -- as the NBA said, it's like there's no conclusive way. If you were to talk to -- if you were to read 100 research papers, 50 would say how rest can really impact and some would say actually no, the opposite, that you need to build up those calluses and blisters.

I think the one thing, and I get it because our guys have missed games, they've been injured. So when you're injured, you're injured. This isn't about, hey, pacing the team, just trying to get them to the Playoffs.

I think both T-Lue and I were talking about saying, look, that the regular season matters, it's just we had a chance of pride, I'd say, even if you think back the year before when we didn't have Kawhi and we only had PG for 30 games. We were out there competing.

It didn't feel like that every night. We get injuries. They suck. But at the same time, we have a responsibility to each other, to the organization, to our fans to make sure that we're playing our hearts out and to do that.

I think having Russ for a full year, having Mason for a full year, having Bones, having the continuity where you do have guys that feel like we owe something to our fans, we owe something to each other, we do have something to prove, and yet we know, hey, it doesn't matter what we say. We've got to do it, and then we've got to be able to sustain it, and then we have to be able to finish it.

Guess what. The competition, there's more quality teams. There's great parity. Denver is clearly the best team in the league, okay. Then there's a lot of high-level teams.

You look at west, it is -- that's why everything matters. You can't take anything for granted.

You have a poor two-week stretch, you could go from being a top 3, top 4 team to where you're battling for the play-in the last game of the season, and there's just -- I think it's a great thing for the NBA, but it's something I think where you can't take anything for granted and to make sure you're making your daily deposits, so to speak.

**Q. With Kawhi coming off injury, last year it was working, like he was obviously building his strength and played well. Now he's coming off another knee injury. How do you guys handle that?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Well, I think the back-to-backs, when you're coming off an ACL -- going into it, we knew that we were going to take it, but if Kawhi -- because Kawhi missed 21 of the first 26, okay. If Kawhi doesn't have the injury, he's playing 65, 68 games. So it wasn't a case of, hey, we're just resting. He's coming off ACL.

I think Jamal Murray, he probably played maybe four back-to-backs. So in terms with this situation, I think we'll go into it, and I think so much of it is let's go through training camp, let's -- then we'll sit down. But Kawhi, one, he wants to play. When he's healthy, he always does play. We're just hoping that he has just good fortune and he's healthy. We're optimistic he will be.

**Q. Is everyone healthy, ready to go for camp, across all 21 guys?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yes. Like I said, knock on whatever because guys are in the gym, whatever, but yeah, everyone is healthy, ready to go.

**Q. With Jason, is his guarantee day still Sunday?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Sunday.

**Q. Is (indiscernible) or is that going to go up until Sunday?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: It'll probably go up right to there, so that's, again, another situation where we're in daily contact with his representation, but it will probably go right up to the date.

**Q. Going back to what you mentioned about Eric, the process of moving on with him, who are some of those guys that you're looking forward to taking the next step, and what are some of those steps that you're looking for?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, to me I think one of the big themes of this camp is going to be about competition. It's going to be about urgency. So who those names are, I don't know. We have a lot of good players. To me it's -- nothing is guaranteed to virtually anyone.

Obviously T-Lue probably locked in, you know, with Kawhi, PG, Russ, but Zub -- but I think regardless, we have a lot of different positional versatility. Kawhi could play up to the 4. He could stay at 3. Terance can play multiple positions,

where you'll see obviously -- Bones, his ability, brand with his -- I could go through the whole roster and probably make a case for each and every one of them.

But I think the beauty of it is there's going to be competition, and we trust T-Lue; he'll find the combinations that work best.

**Q. With Kawhi's ability to slide out to the 4 and PG obviously able to slide up to the 3, do you see a pathway for Terance potentially starting alongside Russ, PG, Kawhi and Zub?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think that's more of a T-Lue question. I think ultimately with it he'll make whatever decisions he thinks is best for the group.

**Q. When you look at -- talking about sacrifice, guys may not play as many minutes, I think that's easier said than done for a lot of guys (indiscernible) Marcus had that thing on social media this off-season, as well. I'm curious, how do you get that buy-in guaranteed from guys?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think it's ultimately -- you're dealing with professionals, and with Niko, RoCo, who's had an unbelievable summer, he's been terrific this off-season, and Marcus, you have three veterans. Ultimately, one year isn't a predictor for what the next year looks like.

The work that they put in, I think there will be great competition on the court. All three are really good players. All three bring different things, and yeah, it's hard. It's hard when you're not playing as well as you want to play. It's hard when you're not playing as much as you want to play.

But every team deals with those dynamics. Who can handle them better?

Yeah, it's tough when -- sacrifice is an easy word to say. It's a lot harder when it's you who has to sacrifice.

Then there's a lot of things that go into it. There's the business of basketball, contract years, how that impacts guys, how that impacts the team. That's why you're really trying to get high-character, competitive guys that put the team first.

**Q. With Michael leaving for Washington, how do you describe how that's transformed roles within your top group within the front office, how it's reshaped any personalities? Obviously we know that Trent gets the promotion, but what's that look like, the workings of your group, how that's changed from this time last year?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, it bumped everyone up, so I think one of the great things -- one, we were super happy for Michael. Sad to lose him but super happy for the opportunity. But there was no pause. Like as soon as Michael left, it was -- and it wasn't just Trent moving up, Mark moving -- everyone moved up in the front office group. Everyone took on a little bit more.

It's a credit to them. We have a deep bullpen of talent that for me it was like, all right, we know what the succession plan is, and because we're a very, very collaborative group, it's not like decisions are made behind closed doors with one or two people. The whole group is very much in the know and understands the process, and I think guys have stepped up, and you just keep moving forward and you get different guys because they're able to grow and women able to grow in different ways.

You see different things that you didn't see before.

**Q. Last year around this time, media day and stuff, depth became the big talking point. You guys thought you had a lot of depth. Did it become almost an illusion during last season that what you thought was a lot of depth went by the wayside almost?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Well, I think the thing is depth can both be a strength and it can be a weakness, and I think ultimately to me, Kawhi and PG healthy, it allows to put them in an easier order. Just because we had some misfortune with it, then for T-Lue it's a very, very hard thing because the bottom line is you have a lot of capable guys, and trying to figure out what buttons to push, it's tricky.

But when you're -- typically every team is built around their best players. It's easier then to plug guys in different roles.

But I think the fact that we've been through it a year I think will help. You address it with the group, the challenges that it presents.

Also when you look around the league, there are a lot of teams that have really, really good depth. This is like -- to be in the NBA is an unbelievable privilege, player or staff, and there's great competition for it.

So I think it's -- yeah, are there problems that come with it? Sure. But also I think there's many positives to it, as well, and hopefully we'll continue to be able to draw those positives out.

**Q. What are the expectations for guys like Kobe and Jordan this year in terms of role? Are they going to spend time in the G-League, stuff like that?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: Yeah, I think what I love about the entire off-season and the entire month of October is you don't make any of those decisions. Let's go. Competition. And we as a team, we as an organization, individually, we have a lot to prove.

Each of us are taking ownership for our part in it, so I say that just -- I don't know yet, and I shouldn't. Kobe has done some really good things. Jordan has done some really good things. I don't care about contract. I don't care how much a guy makes or doesn't make. Ultimately at the end of the day I know T-Lue is going to put the best group out on the floor that gives us a best chance to win every single night, and from there, once roles are established, then we can say, okay, here's your development plan.

But right now, we want those guys going for it. Go prove that you should be in the rotation.

**Q. (Indiscernible) are you in a wait-and-see mode that there could possibly be some sort of deal?**

LAWRENCE FRANK: I'd answer it this way. One, we like our group. We like our team.

You are always looking for ways to get better, both individually and as a team. Typically if you just follow the probability, the greatest way to get better is internal improvement, but from our standpoint we'll always be aggressive, trying to find ways to improve the team.

The timelines are the timelines, but I like our group. I like our approach. We'll always look for ways to get better.

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