

Pac-12 Conference Men's Basketball Media Day

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Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Arizona State Sun Devils

Bobby Hurley

Frankie Collins

Jamiya Neal



THE MODERATOR: We continue here. It's great to have the head coach of the Arizona State Sun Devils entering his ninth season, Bobby Hurley, coach. Great to see you.

BOBBY HURLEY: Thank you.

Q. We're less than a month away from your opener, and you'll be in Chicago to play Mississippi State. Give us a sense for how you feel about your team.

BOBBY HURLEY: We had a really good summer. I think it starts there. We got back in June and took a foreign trip for the first time in a number of years, with COVID and everything. It was a great experience for our players getting a chance to play two pro games in France and Greece.

Just a great bonding experience, great educational experience for our players.

Q. How important is that, Bobby? Like a lot of schools in this day and age of college basketball, a lot of roster turnover. How important -- it seems like every team in the league took a trip to Europe this summer. How important is that when you have so many new players coming in?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, it's huge. Nine new players, two high school players, a junior college player, and six transfers. A good core nucleus with Frankie Collins, Jamiya Neal, and Alonzo Gaffney. But just to see the guys interact off the court and getting along and laughing and having a good time, it really accelerates the process of bringing a group together.

Q. Bobby, can you talk about the improvement in the game of Jamiya Neal. Obviously he was injured to start last year and then really was maybe your best player at the end of the year. Can you talk about his

importance and his progress.

BOBBY HURLEY: Jamiya, he was cut out to have a better season last year. Injuries derailed the first part of his season. He had a setback and kind of fell behind some guys in the rotation. As the year went on, he really gained a lot of confidence and momentum.

Austin Nunez was out with injury late in the year, and that provided an opening for him to go get more playing time, and he took full advantage of it. He was, as you said, one of our best players down the stretch. Played great at Arizona. Played great in the Pac-12 Tournament and the NCAA Tournament.

So I feel like he's taken another step. He's been a great leader this summer. He's going to cushion the blow of losing Deshaun Cambridge and DJ Horne, who put a lot of points on the board for us last year.

Q. You mentioned all the newcomers to this team, the six transfers. You don't have to go player by player necessarily, but is there a common thread to the players you brought in?

BOBBY HURLEY: We like to find guys that are a little bit -- were undervalued, and I think that we were able to come up with a couple of gems.

Shawn Phillips has been outstanding in our workouts, 7-footer, 7'5" wingspan. He was a top 75 player out of high school. Played his first year at LSU and transferred back to Arizona, where he went to prep school. He's had a major impact in our workouts with playing above the rim and shot blocking and all those things.

Kamari Lands is another top 50 player, transfer from Louisville, that I think will provide again some scoring punch for us with the losses that we sustained on the perimeter last year.

Q. You made the NCAA Tournament last year. We already mentioned the roster turnover and how many new guys, but you feel like, when you get to the tournament, you win a game, that creates a little

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momentum for your program; but how difficult is that to sustain when you have so many new guys in the program?

BOBBY HURLEY: Great point. It's tough, but now we could reinforce that message every day. We have guys that understand what it takes to get there in Frankie Collins, Jamiya Neal, Alonzo Gaffney. And Frankie and Jamiya are juniors, Zo is a senior. So I think they know what it takes, and we've been trying to just make sure the other guys are on board and practicing and training the way we need to.

Q. How much -- again, I know I keep bringing it up, but it's kind of what everyone's talking about in college basketball. Do you change what you do based on the personnel coming in? Do you recruit the portal to match what you do? I guess what I'm asking is with this new group, are you changing the way you're doing things or the way you're going to play?

BOBBY HURLEY: I think with us, from a resource standpoint, we can't just say I think we'll take this guy and this guy and this guy. We have to be very strategic about what we're doing, and it may not be ideally the group that you envision that you want to put out on the floor, but we're doing the best we can to get the players in the program that have something to prove.

I think we're bringing in some guys that are coming from some places where they didn't have a lot of success last year. I have two players transfer from LSU, one from Louisville, and hopefully they're hungry to be a part of winning basketball.

Q. I want to talk about your coaching staff because now it's got some deep NBA ties. Hunter Eisenhower, Greg Lansing, what does that mean for ASU men's basketball and helping players you have get to the next level?

BOBBY HURLEY: I'm excited about the additions. I've added a couple of former players to my staff, some younger guys. Jarryn Skeete, who played with me at Buffalo, one of the first players I coached as a head coach, I brought him out. Mickey Mitchell, who played obviously at ASU, was a great player for us and on some of our NCAA Tournament teams.

Then like you said, we added some experience with Greg Lansing, who's a head coach for ten years at Indiana State and also worked in the NBA.

So our strength and conditioning coach, Hunter, also had experience with the Sacramento Kings as a strength

coach.

Yeah, we tried to stay youthful and relatable to our players but also bring coaches in that have that experience.

Q. I know it's early, Bobby, but after ten days, almost two weeks of practice, what's going to be the key for you guys to come out of the gate strong and again incorporating all these new guys, offensively or defensively?

BOBBY HURLEY: I just think it's more about consistency. I think we've struggled a little bit in practice just putting together multiple practices where we're sustaining a high level of play. Just trying to break bad habits and not allow slippage to come into practices and avoid poor practices.

I've tried to remind our team of that because I think with us we had two games last year, our Texas Southern game we lost at the buzzer, and obviously San Francisco, those games impacted our ability to be straight in the NCAA Tournament, where we don't have to go to Dayton and win a game. I would have loved to see our first game not be played in Dayton the way we played against Nevada in that first round.

Q. Bobby, kind of going back to what Donny was talking about, last year you coached the hell out of them on the defensive side, and you were so creative offensively that it seemed like you really let the guys go. You lost so much offense. Will you be maybe more structured or more involved, if you will, during the games offensively? Are you more concerned with your offense than your defense?

BOBBY HURLEY: Well, I like our speed and our length on the perimeter. Then our rim protection with Alonzo Gaffney and Shawn Phillips, that combination just with the length of those two guys, ability to block shots. So I think offensively we have some good potential.

You're right on the experience front, but there are guys that I've seen in practice that I trust that can put points on the board. I think Frankie Collins, Jamiya, Alonzo Gaffney all should take another step in their game and really add to production at the offensive end of the floor.

Q. I asked you about common thread between the transfers, and as you mentioned, it's not all of them, but a couple of them are returning home. Given the level of high school basketball, so many good players come out of that state. Is that what you're finding, the ability to continue to bring guys home as the portal moves along?

BOBBY HURLEY: I will say that about being at Arizona State and with all the up-and-coming prep schools, and these kids are going to school there and really enjoying the weather and being in that environment. Then they may go to college, and we're involved in recruiting those type of players. We recruited Kamari Lands out of high school, and he was a prep player in Arizona, and it didn't work out his first year, and then he came back to us.

Certainly, if we can utilize that to our advantage, we will in recruiting.

Q. Your tenure at Arizona State, Bob, you've had so many good guards. I don't want you to compare them, but where is Frankie Collins now in terms of what you expect, what you want, and what you need him to do for you guys to be really good this year?

BOBBY HURLEY: I think Frankie is a great leader, and you could hear his voice in practice. I think that's where it's taken another step. He's really worked extremely hard on his perimeter shooting, and I think you'll see improvement in that area. He's a physical, downhill guard that could defend and make an impact on the game in multiple ways.

I think Jamiya Neal and Frankie Collins should strive to be two of the best rebounding guards in the Pac-12 because both of those guys have size, strength, athleticism, and I think they can make an impact in that area.

Q. Let's talk about your schedule for a second, you'll be back here in Vegas, BYU, either NY State or Vandy. San Francisco, you've played a lot of games with them over the years, SMU, at San Diego, TCU play in Phoenix. What stands out to you about your schedule?

BOBBY HURLEY: I just think the neutral site games, we've really focused on that this year and how we've built our nonconference schedule to play some NCAA Tournament teams on a neutral site from multiple conferences, power conferences. I think that's where everything happens.

When we get to Vegas and the season's on the line at the Pac-12 Tournament or the NCAA Tournament, it all goes down on a neutral site. So we want to train and practice and try to excel in nonconference playing those games against very good teams on a neutral site.

Q. Jamiya Neal and Frankie Collins are here. We're going to bring them up in just a second. As they come up, could you tell us why they're here.

BOBBY HURLEY: They played together last year. They

were two of the better guards in the league late in the season. I think they're going to -- they could be a devastating combination at both ends of the floor just with their creativity, their athleticism, and their ability to impact the game at both ends of the floor.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome up Frankie Collins and Jamiya Neal now.

Q. Two more guys that have been in the weight room this summer.

FRANKIE COLLINS: Yeah, getting it right.

Q. What's been the off-season workout program, Jamiya?

JAMIYA NEAL: This is the most we've lifted since I've been here, to be honest. We do a lot of different stuff. Every day is like a full body lift. We get the most out of our days.

We'll go hard for about an hour every day, and it's been paying off.

Q. Bobby just touched on you two. I think the goal, looking at the league at least, you guys could strive to be one of the best backcourts in the league. What do you guys think about that?

JAMIYA NEAL: I think we could do it. I think we're very confident in ourselves. Coach is confident what we can do, and I think if we bring it every night, we can show everybody that we will be one of the best backcourts in the Pac-12 this year.

Q. Frankie, going through some of the highlights from last year, your dunk in the TCU game, is that your home screen photo?

FRANKIE COLLINS: No, it's not my home screen photo, but it was definitely a great moment. It was a great moment.

Q. How much for you -- and I asked Bobby a few questions about it -- how many new years you have and how much responsibility do you guys have to try to -- I mean, it's the coaching staff, but for you guys as players, to help incorporate them into the system too, Frankie?

FRANKIE COLLINS: I think just us being here the last couple -- well, Jamiya the last couple years, me last year, I think just understanding how Coach Hurley operates and being that voice and taking that next step in the leadership



role and helping everybody out there on the court.

We have a very inexperienced team, so just getting them all on the same page and understanding what we've got going on.

Q. You mentioned your off-season workout program. It's important to get in the gym obviously and hit the weights, but coinciding with that is nutrition and getting your caloric intake as far as getting the right macronutrients. What sort of nutrition program are you collaborating with your workouts?

Have you had to up your caloric intake? Are you going for lean muscle mass? What's been the nutrition aspect of it?

FRANKIE COLLINS: For me, since the end of last season, I've been on like a diet, a no-sugar diet. So I kind of just cut out a couple things that I shouldn't be eating for me to up my muscle mass and lower my body fat.

JAMIYA NEAL: Frank was already strong, so me, I just eat as much as I can, drink as much as I can.

(Laughter).

That was really kind of the hard part for me because you work out and you practice and you work out after practice, and you've got to gain all those calories back. You might lose a lot of calories, and you might think you're eating a lot, but you've got to eat more and drink more. Hunter always tells us you're eating because you've got to eat more. I try to eat as much as I can and drink as much as I can.

Q. Why is that so funny to you, Frankie?

FRANKIE COLLINS: He's a funny dude (laughter).

Q. What did you have to cut out?

FRANKIE COLLINS: It's a strict diet. If I went down the list, it would be a lot. I really just cut out a lot of sugar, no sugar, so I don't eat candy, I don't eat anything with over about 4 grams of sugar. That was really the hardest part.

As a teenager, as young men, like we like to eat candy. We eat candy. We eat cereal. You eat a whole bunch of other stuff that's unnecessary. Me cutting all that out, eating more fruit, making more protein shakes and stuff like that.

Q. How much fun was the European trip this summer?

FRANKIE COLLINS: That was amazing. I think that was

probably one of the best times I had in my life. Getting to enjoy it with my teammates was even better. Getting to know them every day we were out there and also getting some games in.

Q. That's what everyone talks about, coaches especially, how important the ten practices are before you go, kind of getting a head start on the season. But the off-the-court bonding those trips provide, Jamiya, was that the case for you?

JAMIYA NEAL: Yeah, it was really fun for me. We had fun. I think we grew. We have a team again. Like last year where everybody likes each other off the court, we all get along. There, we got to talk and learn more about each other and stuff like that. We got to swim and all type of stuff, and we got on boats. We got on the jet skis. I don't know, what was the thing called?

FRANKIE COLLINS: You all should have saw Coach Hurley's face on the banana, the boat.

JAMIYA NEAL: We got on the banana boat with Coach. He was on the edge. He almost fell off. It was crazy.

Q. Watching you guys play last year, you guys played well off each other, but I think now you're going to be so much more dominant, and a lot of times when we have the teams up here, you might have a guard and a big or something like that. You guys can both really handle it, distribute it, play make. Have you guys talked about it? And/or when you guys have played in practice now or preseason, how you guys play off each other, what does that look like this year with two great ball handlers and great play makers?

JAMIYA NEAL: Me and Frank are both willing passers, and we want to see each other do great. This summer we played a pro-am together to get some more reps together. We like playing with each other because we both like seeing each other do well.

I'm never jealous of what Frank's doing. He's never jealous of what I'm doing. Our games complement each other because we both can shoot, we both like to get downhill, we both like to make the right plays, and we both guard. We both can guard 1 through 3. I like the combo of me and Frank because we're so similar.

Q. Can you guys talk about what it's like to play for Coach Hurley? And especially Frankie being a point guard, and he was the point guard. The standard he holds you to.

FRANKIE COLLINS: I would say just with Coach Hurley,

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he was one of the best college point guards to play, so just understanding how he approached the game and how he would have me approach the game. He always makes sure I'm ready and I'm on my feet ready for whatever's coming.

I think just having that same energy and intensity he has when he's coaching, he tries to instill that into me.

Q. Of the newcomers to your Sun Devil program, which of them is really catching your eye, where you slap each other and go, oh, my, wow.

FRANKIE COLLINS: Shawn Phillips, Kamari Lands, Adam Miller. I would say all three of those. One with Shawn Phillips, he's 7-foot with almost a 40-inch vertical. He can really get up there. He plays hard. He blocks shots. Crazy wing span.

With Kamari Lands, his shot-making ability has been up there ever since we started, since he stepped foot on campus.

JAMIYA NEAL: I would say pretty much everyone, to be honest. What I like about our team and with our newcomers is we have a whole bunch of guys who have a lot to prove. We have guys who are hungry to show what they can do. I think that will help us because, when they get out there, we have something to prove. We don't have a lot of guys who are highly ranked or whose stats are the best.

Even mine and Frank's, we have everybody stepping into a bigger role, and I think that's what's going to help us because we all have each other's back because we're all doing something we haven't done before.

Q. Getting back to that Pro-Am, Jamiya, somebody told me a story yesterday that you had 46 in one of the games this summer.

JAMIYA NEAL: Yeah, I was trying to go for Coach's record. He had 50. I had 46 and 48, and Coach kept telling me, well, I had 50 back in the day, so don't come in here on your high horse.

Q. It wasn't the same Pro-Am, though, or was it?

JAMIYA NEAL: You're only allowed to play in one Pro-Am as a college student. It was the same Pro-Am. We played every week up until -- we played every weekend up until we had to go to the Bahamas.

Q. Was it in town?

JAMIYA NEAL: Yeah, it was in town.

Q. Frankie, in a few days you are going to participate in Dribble For Cancer?

FRANKIE COLLINS: Yes.

Q. This is 8,896 simultaneous basketballs bouncing to set a Guinness world record, is that right?

FRANKIE COLLINS: Yeah. I think it was just something that you try and help the nonprofits and the communities out there.

Q. A.C. Green, Ann Meyers Drysdale, you dribbling one basketball or two basketballs? I guess you could do two, right?

FRANKIE COLLINS: I could dribble two basketballs, yeah. That's crazy (laughter).

Q. I don't get it. What are you laughing about, Frankie?

FRANKIE COLLINS: It was the smirk. While you said it, you smirked right at me.

Q. You thought he didn't think you could dribble two basketballs?

FRANKIE COLLINS: Yeah.

Q. I'm pretty sure you can dribble two basketballs.

FRANKIE COLLINS: Yeah, I can dribble two basketballs.

Q. I was just thinking, if they had a bunch of Frankie Collins, you can dribble 16,000 basketballs. That's all.

FRANKIE COLLINS: I said I would dribble two basketballs. Two basketballs, we're good. You got two.

THE MODERATOR: I'm looking forward to seeing you guys and all the new guys you have. It starts with you two. Stay healthy and have a good season.

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