

# USA Basketball Media Conference

Monday, December 20, 2021

## Steve Kerr Grant Hill

### Press Conference



GRANT HILL: First of all want to thank the Golden State Warriors for hosting this, and of course, the incredible Golden State Warriors senior vice president of communications, Raymond Ridder, for assisting in helping put this together.

I am truly excited and delighted to announce the USA Basketball Men's National team coaching staff led by head coach Steve Kerr and Eric Spoelstra, Mark Few and Monty Williams as assistant coaches.

Obviously this is an incredible staff, great experience, very talented and Coach Kerr, as someone who has had remarkable success at all levels throughout his basketball journey, some of which I'm going to reference here so I don't get it wrong.

But as a player, he won five NBA Championships, led the University of Arizona to the NCAA Final Four, was a member of the last US Team comprised of collegians to win a FIBA World Cup and is considered one of the game's greatest three-point shooters ever.

As a coach he's renowned for cultivating outstanding chemistry and providing invaluable leadership as he has led Golden State to enviable success, numerous records and three NBA Championships.

In his role most recently as an assistant coach for Coach Popovich in the 2017 through 2021 USA national teams, he gained valuable insight and coaching experience both with the USA national team and in FIBA competitions. He helped lead the U.S. to a Gold Medal finish at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

In my opinion, basketball people would agree that he is the ideal candidate for the USA National Men's Basketball Team. Coach Kerr's success as an NBA coach and his USA Basketball experiences make him the ideal coach to lead us into the future.

Without further ado, want to announce and give the floor to

Steve Kerr, head coach, USA men's national basketball team.

STEVE KERR: Thank you. Thank you so much. What an incredible honor and opportunity. It is truly humbling. People say that all the time, but this is truly humbling when I think about how few coaches have ever had this opportunity to be a coach of the Olympic Team and of USA Basketball and how many amazing candidates there are out there.

So I have been very, very blessed, very lucky in my career, and this opportunity is a result of being in the right place at the right time, working with the right people, having a lot of people lift me up along the way, and -- and then, you know, given the opportunity to be part of USA Basketball over the last few summers.

So first I want to thank you, Grant, Sean Ford, Jim Tooley, general Martin Dempsey, all the senior members of the USA Basketball committee, thank you for the opportunity.

I also want to thank Jerry Colangelo and Gregg Popovich for the opportunity to be part of the staff over the past three summers. No question the reason I'm sitting here now is because of that opportunity, so thanks to Pop and Jerry.

I will say that the experience I've had over the last few summers has been just an incredible basketball and life experience. You know, to coach with Pop, to experience both the World Cup and the Olympics, it's a really unique situation. It's a unique environment. It's basically a six-week sprint where you get the players together and you get the coaching staff together and you've got to figure out a way how to win pretty quickly.

I think back to this past summer in Tokyo winning the Gold Medal, doing so with a group of players and coaches; we will share that bond for life. And I think the same thing that attracts players to want to play for the national team is what attracts coaches.

So I know for me, working with Pop, working with Jay Wright, Lloyd Pierce, Ime Udoka, Chip England, Will Hardy, Jeff van Gundy, every day in that coaches room,



first in Vegas and then in Japan, was just incredible. The learning environment, the chemistry, the buzz you feel as you're trying to accomplish something together, and then to meet with the players after your meeting and try to put it all together, it's the ultimate challenge and the ultimate high as a basketball coach to experience this.

I could not be any more excited, thrilled about the staff that we've put together. Any one of these guys could be the head coach. Erik Spoelstra, Monty Williams, Mark Few, all so qualified and all have been involved with USA Basketball, and I can't wait to get to work with those three gentlemen and the other staff members that we'll put together over the next couple years.

Finally, I want to thank the Warriors, because you know, I've had one coaching job in the NBA, and that's with the Golden State Warriors. My life has been enhanced beyond belief by coming to the Bay Area and working in this organization with Joe Lacob and Peter Guber and the rest of the ownership group, Bob Myers, all the assistant coaches that I've enjoyed having by my side over the years, and you know, most importantly, the players: Steph, Draymond, Andre, Klay, down the list. Those are the guys who are responsible for me sitting here, because you don't reach this level unless you have success, and you don't have success unless you have players.

So I want to thank the Warriors and thank all of our players, and that's a good reminder that you have got to get some players for us in the next couple years.

Thank you.

GRANT HILL: We will get some players indeed.

**Q. You kind of just referred to it there, but obviously your post-playing career, TV, GM, you talked about always want to go get to coach, and now you're Team USA coach and seem solidified here with the Warriors. Do you view this as your career moving forward until retirement, basically?**

STEVE KERR: SOMETIMES I think back on my career and I wonder how it all happened. Grant and I first really got connected in Phoenix when he was a GM and I was a player.

To think back at all the opportunities I've been given, and that I've received, it's sort of remarkable. And as I mentioned, it really is a matter of being very fortunate with the people around me. I think back to the coaches who I've played before, Coach Olson at Arizona and also with USA Basketball in 1986, all of my NBA coaches, Cotton Fitzsimmons, Lenny Wilkins, Gregg Popovich, Phil

Jackson; I've just sort of continued to find this path where I've had amazing people around me who have guided me and somehow the path continues. I'm not going to stop and think about it too much because I'll wonder how it happened.

But it's happened. I'm here. I love every second of every day preparing to coach basketball. It's a dream job and doesn't get much better than being the coach of the USA Basketball Team. So I'm thrilled.

**Q. First off, you've accomplished so much in your career already. What was it like getting the call that you were the guy for this job?**

STEVE KERR: Well, it was a surprise to be honest with you, even though we spent the whole summer together in Tokyo, and Grant was with us in Las Vegas. But Sean Ford, you know, getting to know Sean over the last few years, it was just a wonderful experience to be part of USA Basketball.

But you just don't stop and think: Oh, maybe I'll be the head coach. It's not something you even dream about. So you don't even afford yourself that time and say, I wonder, "if"; you just put your head down and you work.

So when this call came, it gave me chills. It's an opportunity of a lifetime, and can't wait to work with all these guys.

**Q. (Have you asked Steph about it)?**

STEVE KERR: Talking about with Team USA? We'll see. You know, these things are very fluid. I've learned a lot over the last couple of years working with Pop and Sean and Jerry, and you just sort of have to let everything unfold because every player's circumstances change constantly.

If Steph is healthy and wants to play, I'm pressure I could convince Grant and Sean to put him on the roster.

GRANT HILL: I thought you had a scoop or something.

STEVE KERR: It would be wonderful but you never know how those things are going to play out. There's a lot of time between now and then.

**Q. How quick did this all come together from when you got the call, getting the job offer, to you accepting and to you helping put together your coaching staff?**

STEVE KERR: Well, I think maybe I'll let Grant answer that because there's a process that has to happen with this hiring, and so there's a few hurdles to get over. I don't

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

know how much you want to share but there's been a process that has led to this point.

But as I said, from coaching over the last few summers with Team USA to now, it's something that I knew if it were an opportunity that came up, I would be very interested.

GRANT HILL: I'll just chime in. The great thing talking with Steve, gauging his level of interest, getting to a point where I felt like he was the right guy, the right person who is uniquely qualified for this role and this responsibility. And you know, obviously USA Basketball has a number of stakeholders, and so making sure that that is discussed and everyone's on board which thankfully happened.

So that took some time to get to this point, but no, Steve was my No. 1 choice, and thankfully there was some great options out there as Steve alluded to in both the college and the NBA ranks.

I think because of a unique set of experiences, I think his basketball acumen, I mean, I can go down the list of reasons we all know Steve was the guy, and we had to go through the process, which I won't bore you with what that is. But ultimately, we got to this point where we are now and we're very thrilled.

**Q. You've built relationships with Pop through him being your coach as a player and also being on the USA coaching staff together. What coaching tendencies have you observed from him as a player and as one of his assistant coaches that you hope to implement both here with the Warriors and Team USA?**

STEVE KERR: Coach Pop has been my mentor for many years. I consider all of my coaches who I've had in the NBA and in college and coaches I've had on this staff to have been instrumental in my growth as a coach. I mean, I started coaching at a very late stage, 49. I was 49 when I took this job. So I had a lot to learn.

But Pop, given that he's been coaching during that entire span, he's really been my mentor. So you know, having played for him for four seasons, and then picked his brain over last seven or eight years, and the opportunity to work with him, I've learned so much not just about the game but about people, about culture, and so a lot of what we do here in Golden State is based on what I learned from Pop.

But the one thing he taught me that really all my coaches shared with me was you have to be yourself. You can't try to be somebody else. You have to be yourself, and I think that was the best advice I could have heard from the beginning. As long as you're authentic and genuine, now you can implement things that you've learned along the

way.

Certainly the things that I learned with Team USA over the last few years, which I think is crucial, given that it's such a different environment and it's a six-week sprint, as I said. I learned so much about the FIBA game, about how we need to approach things. Those experiences with Pop and the entire staff will be huge for me going forward.

**Q. You just alluded a couple times to the six-week sprint. How different is coaching Team USA, coaching international basketball than what you do all the time with the Warriors what different skillset and approach do you need in this new job?**

STEVE KERR: Well, No. 1, the game is very different. The FIBA game is very different from the NBA, 40 minutes, very different rules, different vibe to the game. Almost feels like an NCAA Tournament game rather than an NBA game.

There's this idea that you've got to figure out your rotations pretty quickly, and your roster, for that matter, and you've got to do everything on the fly with the staff. It really is a collaborative effort, which is what makes it so much fun.

The NBA, you have, you know, anywhere from seven to nine months for your team to develop, and you can slowly add things here or there. You can't do that in six weeks. So you've got to be really clear and concise about what you're teaching and why, and you've got to get right to it. You know, ultimately, it's the talent and ability of the players that either gets it done or not, but it's our job as coaches to put those guys in the very best position to succeed, and I look forward to that.

**Q. You've spoken out a bunch over the last several years on topics you're passionate about. It's obviously such an unsettled time in the country. Hoping you could give your perspective on wearing the USA, representing from that perspective nationally and kind of what that means?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I could be not more proud to represent my country, you know, as a basketball coach. This is sort of my one opportunity to really represent my country in a very public way, and I know all of the players and staff feel that way. We had an enormous sense of pride in Tokyo this past summer in that representation under Coach Pop and under Jerry Colangelo in collaboration with the players. We want to go out and do everything with class. We want to do everything we can to make sure that people in this country are really proud of our efforts and proud of the way we carry ourselves and proud of the way we represent our country.

**Q. Both of you know this, and have heard it over the last couple years for sure; that maybe the main thing about USA Basketball and the challenges it faces has to do with roster continuity, just getting the guys that you want on the team to commit and build the familiarity and all that. And so have you two discussed this and what is your plan to address the idea of getting a matchup year commitment out of the A-List stars to play for Team USA?**

GRANT HILL: Steve and I, collectively along with Sean Ford and the USA Basketball staff, you know, we have an opportunity now moving forward to sort of analyze what's worked, maybe figure out where we can refresh some things or maybe try or apply things differently.

I think the landscape has changed significantly. I also want to say, this past year was incredibly challenging and difficult. The ability to adapt and adjust, I think we all are embodying that in all of our walks of lives in terms of how to continue forward in the environment that we're in.

But we have a chance to really look and dive into some of those things, and Steve and I have talked not just about the roster and how that looks or the continuity from the World Cup to the Olympic Games, but other issues or other concerns. And so we've had many of those preliminary discussions already, but I think we look forward to really diving in further and examining, okay, where can we be better or what can we maybe do differently here; what have we learned in recent years or over the course of the last decade.

Steve has a pretty significant real job right now, and so we're respectful and mindful of that. But I look forward to personally having these type of discussions and conversations and working together to move forward with USA Basketball and the men's team.

**Q. My other one I had for Steve, and I apologize if you addressed this, but as you know, both Pop and before him Coach K talked about just sort of the pressure they felt to win a Gold, and I know the Olympics are two years away and you haven't qualified for them yet, but do you think you'll feel that or how do you feel now that you have this job? Do you feel that weight that Gregg had and Mike before him?**

STEVE KERR: For sure. I mean, I think part of the reason that Coach K and Gregg Pop are Hall of Fame coaches is because they have enjoyed the challenge. They have enjoyed the pressure. That's part of it. I think when we choose this profession at this level, we understand exactly what we're getting into.

But with a great challenge comes great reward, and satisfaction. And this is really probably a lot harder than people realize, especially given the growth of the game globally, how many good players there are out there, how many strong teams there are out there.

But this is something that I embrace. Will I feel the pressure? Absolutely. We all will. But that's kind of the point. It's competition and we all love to compete and that's why we do this.

**Q. Can you talk about your relationship with Mark Few and why you wanted to add him to the staff and what you think he can add to USA Basketball?**

STEVE KERR: For me or for Grant?

**Q. For you, thank you.**

STEVE KERR: I've known him over the years from afar but really gotten to know him the last summer when he got to coach the select team with Eric Spoelstra, and we really hit it off. And I think the whole room, frankly, the whole coaches' room was blown away by Mark's insight, his perspective.

I think it's wonderful to have a college coach as part of the process because the college game is different, just like the FIBA game is different. Jay Wright was amazing. Both Jay and Mark really offered insight that maybe NBA coaches hadn't thought of because the games are so different.

Mark and I really hit it off. I think he hit it off with all of the coaches. He is absolutely a no-brainer, one of the great coaches at any level of basketball in our country, and he's going to be amazing to work with.

**Q. I remember seeing you in the mix zone coming off the court after France, and everyone was exhausted. Like you said, it's a six-week sprint and it's hard to sprint for six weeks and you guys went through an awful lot in those six weeks. Can you take us through the process of after the Olympics, what the decompression was like, when the sense of accomplishment kicked in, did you get a chance to celebrate at all before you had to jump back to, as Grant said, your real job? When did it hit you what you guys had done?**

STEVE KERR: Yeah, I think it was about a month before training camp started and I had grand plans to go to Las Vegas for Summer League and then come up to the Bay for summer workouts, and when I got back, I realized, I'm

not doing anything for about three weeks. I stayed in San Diego, which is my off-season home, and just completely checked out.

And it was much needed because it is a sprint and it is exhausting and exhilarating and you need to come down from all of that. I think the great thing is, there's a bond for life with every guy on the team, every guy on the staff. You know, we played the Celtics the other night, and you know, just sharing a moment with Jason Tatum after the game was wonderful. We played Phoenix a couple of weeks ago and visiting with Devin Booker after the game was amazing.

And so you know, these relationships that you develop quickly, but powerfully, they last forever and those are the reasons to coach, frankly. The experiences and the relationships, that's what it's all about.

Yes, it's exhausting and exhilarating, and yes, you do need time to come back down, but I wouldn't trade it for the word.

**Q. How you doing and congratulations. With the way COVID has been popping up rapidly lately, you guys have some qualifying games coming up in February. What are some steps that you guys will look to take to make sure that you that this team that you have set up stays in tact without anybody stepping out or anything?**

GRANT HILL: Yeah, I think it's a great question. USA Basketball, and Steve can speak to this having gone through this six-week sprint this past summer, with the safety measures and precautions that the staff and Sean Ford, Jim Tooley went through this past summer were absolutely incredible, and I had an opportunity to be there for just a week in Las Vegas as the men's national team was preparing to go off to Tokyo.

And the safety, the well-being of all the players, the coaches, the staff, is of the utmost importance. I think we all know that this COVID environment that we're in is very fluid. We're all experiencing it in the NBA and all professional sports, but I know we'll be diligent. I know we'll be careful, and think of the long-term health and wellness of all those that are involved in the qualifying rounds, the upcoming ones.

So a lot can and will happen between now and then, but I can assure that you our medical team is certainly on it and doing all we can, and following all the best practices, and certainly doing what we can to protect everyone.

**Q. How much influence has Steph Curry been on the**

**game so far?**

STEVE KERR: That's a very broad and open-ended question. I'll tell you a quick story. We were in Boston the other night, and before the game, there was a game with 10-year-olds being played on the main court, and it was on our screen as we came in for our pick-and-roll game scout. Walk in, the game's on and all the guys are watching it, all the coaches are watching it, and about seven straight possessions, these 10-year-old kids launched three-pointers. I turned to Steph and said, "Steph, this is all your fault."

All you have to do is look at all the young players coming up, whether they are ten years old or 21 or 19 coming into the NBA for the first time. Everybody wants to launch from three.

He's changed the game probably forever. Beyond that, though, for me, just the way Steph carries himself, the way he is so coachable, just sets a tone here for the Warriors. He's the face much our franchise, and I'm incredibly blessed to coach him.

**Q. You played with one dynasty, Chicago Bulls, you won championships, and you won championships as a coach. How is it to win a Gold Medal as a head coach of Team USA, and what does it mean for your legacy as a coach and as a person, as well?**

STEVE KERR: Well, I appreciate the question. I think the biggest thing as a coach is you don't think about any of that stuff. You just kind of do your job and you do it because you like it. I love my job. I've loved coaching since the first day eight years ago, and when an opportunity like this comes along, you don't stop and say: Well, I wonder what my legacy will be.

You say: Man, I can't wait to dive in with the players and the coaches, and you go for it, and when all dust settles, you just keep going forward and hopefully we will put together a great team and a great effort and we'll see how we do.

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