

October 23, 2014



An interview with:

COACH STEVE ALFORD NORMAN POWELL

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to introduce UCLA head coach Steve Alford and senior guard Norman Powell.

Steve, if you could provide an opening remark.

COACH ALFORD: Well, we're excited to get the season going. We've had about 12, 13 practices. It is a young team, kind of inexperienced team to some sorts. But a team that if we can improve as the year goes along as much as we've improved the last two weeks, we're pretty excited about where this season could go.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for coach or Norman.

Q. Norman, there's been a lot of turnover in this program of guys going to the NBA, a new coach a couple years ago. You've been one of the few faces of stability in this program. How do you use that experience to help lead this team?

NORMAN POWELL: Just really staying with who we got, reinforcing it's about the team, the family. For the freshmen coming in, it's just believing in what coach wants from us. If they need anything, being open with them, being helpful, trying to guide them in the right footsteps of where coach wants us to be defensively and offensively, what he wants out of us for this program.

COACH ALFORD: At least it's a pretty face. If you have a face of the program, you want to have a pretty face (laughter).

Q. Coach, Bryce Alford was paired with Zach LaVine, a pretty devastating combo off the bench last season. Do you see a different

role for Bryce this season and what do you see in the backcourt?

COACH ALFORD: Obviously, not just Bryce, but all those guys. Norman will have a different role. Norman played last year in the same backcourt with Kyle [Anderson] and Jordan [Adams]. Now he's the vet in that backcourt, the go-to guy in the backcourt. That's not just scoring, that means defensively, how we handle the ball, all those things.

Now guys like Bryce from a year ago coming off the bench playing one role, obviously has a chance to be a starter. Isaac Hamilton, that was a trio, Isaac, Zach and Bryce, the gold team. Isaac and Bryce have played a lot together, not in games, but they have a lot of experience playing with each other in practice. Hopefully that will help.

Norman is getting two new backcourt mates to start the game. That's not always easy. But I think both those guys are talented. Bryce has the ability to lead, he has the ability to make people around him better. He understands ball control, understands what we want to do offensively and defensively. I think he's a guy that the team will look to for leadership, and that's going to be a key for us.

Q. Last year stylistically, that was one of the fastest teams you ever coached. Is that something you're going to continue to do, different to what you've previously done?

COACH ALFORD: Well, I hope so. We want to be able to continue to do the things we've done, especially with the speed with which we want to play. We talk about it in our locker room all the time. We want to play fast. We want to play quick.

In the words of Coach Wooden, you can't get in a hurry. There's a fine line. You can only run as hard as you can to where you're valuing the ball.

Last year's team did a great job with that. We averaged 17-and-a-half assists and less than 11 turnovers last year. As far as efficiency goes, it was an efficient offense. To sustain that, our guys

have to understand what level they can play at where they're not turning the ball over at a high rate.

I'm hoping we can do that. We have a lot of athletes. Obviously we're led by Norman. Bryce wants to play fast. Isaac wants to play fast. Noah Allen now comes in that mix. He can play fast. Guys like Kevon Looney, Gyorgy Goloman Wanaah Bail, all big-time athletes that want to play up and down.

Now we have to make sure that guys like Tony Parker, Thomas Welsh, guys in the middle can keep up and do the things we want to do. I think we're a team this year that has the potential to make post feeds to big guys. Last year most of our post feeds were to guards. This year we have the ability to post feed to bigs. We need to find that fine balance of being able to play quick but also utilize the size we have up front.

Q. Coach, how much will the December 20th date against Kentucky be a measuring stick for you as you get set to take on Pac-12 opponents?

COACH ALFORD: Obviously there will be a lot made of that game. We have so much in front of us beforehand being an inexperienced group. We have four fairly difficult home games to start the season because three of those four teams have more NCAA experience than our guys do to some extent. A lot of guys back.

Then we go to the Bahamas tournament, in a bracket with North Carolina, Butler, the topside of that Wisconsin, Florida, Georgetown, UAB. So we're getting incredible opponents there. We come back for a few weeks and we have Gonzaga. We have Gonzaga before we play Kentucky.

Tough stretch for us. Gonzaga, Kentucky, Alabama, Utah and Colorado, a tough five-game stretch. We have to hope by the time we get to the Utah/Colorado series that we're a much different team.

We're not going to put any more emphasis on one game, obviously although I understand that's hard to do for a team and everybody else. We talked about it as early as the retreat we just got back from.

It's a process, it's a journey. It's a long season. Get better. Each month, if we can get better, are we ready to play the likes of Kentucky today? No. I hope we're a little bit better ready for that when we get to mid December.

Q. What do you like about having Norman as that backcourt for you?

COACH ALFORD: I've known Norm for a long time, him being from San Diego. One of his close mentors is Glen Worley who played for me at the University of Iowa. When I was at New Mexico, coming into San Diego to recruit, I couldn't convince him to come to New Mexico. He had his eyes set on UCLA at the time.

I was able to watch him a lot, so I knew his game very well. I'm still in very good contact with Glen Worley. I know him as well as maybe anybody, though I've only coached him for a year and a half now. We know his pluses. We know what he's trying to work on. We've been able to develop that trust. That trust that's been built, now it's his job to help lead these other guys.

That part of leadership is taking care of yourself, making sure yourself is in line. He's done a very good job of doing that, and now he has guys that will follow him. That's a very big key to leadership.

Q. Norman, how has it been practicing with the new guys?

NORMAN POWELL: It's been great. It's always nice to see guys who are willing to learn, want to compete, want to get better. We know this team is really young. They know a lot is going to be asked of them this season. It's about coming in with an open mind, trying to get better. I love the depth we have, actually having two big men, having versatility in Kevon and Isaac. It's really great. I'm really excited to get on the court and compete with these guys.

Q. Coach, there's that image from last season's Pac-12 Tournament game against Arizona. Travis [Wear] sliding across the court. What did it mean to have guys like that in your first year in terms of level of commitment for the program?

COACH ALFORD: Well, I've said it. I'm very blessed to have coached the team that I coached last year. I was their third collegiate basketball coach. That's not easy. They're fifth-year guys. A lot of them, made out of the three guys, caused hardship in Zach, Jordan and Kyle.

Obviously very, very important to the success of what we did. But Dave and Travis were extremely big in their roles because they had such

a great IQ, they were big men that could pass it and shoot it, they defended well.

So we're going to miss them. Those five guys meant an awful lot to our success. But I'm very thankful that first-year team, obviously Norman a big part of it, they trusted us as coaches. We were new coaches coming in, new system. They bought in from day one back in May. We really started to work back in May.

It's a great credit to the players because they're the ones that got it done. They could have easily wrote it off, especially being seniors. That's a great credit not just to who they are as players but who they are as people. Our staff really appreciated it.

It was a blast. We had a lot of fun last year. Hopefully we can build on that fun this year.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you for your time.

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