

PAC-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Friday, October 21 2016

Andy Enfield
Elijah Stewart
USC Trojans



THE MODERATOR: All right, welcome head coach Andy Enfield and Elijah Stewart from USC. Coach, an opening remark, and then questions.

ANDY ENFIELD: We're excited for another season. Really proud of our team for improving last year. We have four returnees, some transfers and four new freshmen. So it will be a different makeup of our roster, but nonetheless, we're excited to get going.

Q. I had the pleasure of covering the Drew League this year, this last summer, and I think Boatright and Metu were both playing in it. And Baron Davis was involved, and I think you were trained by Baron Davis, possibly. I may have read that. I was just wondering how you think that helped them out for the next season? Either one of you.

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, Bennie and Chimezie did play in the Drew League, and De'Anthony Melton, our incoming freshman, and a few other players. So any summer experience is good. It's positive. They play against grown men, professionals, college players, and they did quite well. So I think it was a good off-season experience for them.

Q. Any challenges coaching a school that's more known for its football than its basketball program just in terms of creating a basketball culture at USC than a football culture?

ANDY ENFIELD: We love USC football. Big football fans. Go to all their games. We root for them like crazy. So it's an advantage to have a big-time football program on campus for a variety of reasons. But the basketball's totally separate. We have to develop our own program, our own culture, get our own players, and it's a credit to our players to create the culture that they want with the help of our coaching staff's direction.

Our players have done an outstanding job of coming to USC. Elijah and Jordan are juniors now, a couple of sophomore and freshmen. For them to come into USC and try to turn the corner and elevate the basketball program to the level of our football program and the other 20 sports of USC which have all won National Championships and competed at a high, national level

for many, many years. That's what we've tried to do. And our players deserve a lot of credit for getting us there.

Q. Coach, you were raised in Pennsylvania. Most of your career was spent outside of the Southern California area. How did you go about making recruiting contacts with AAU and high school coaches in a place that you've never been before? And how has that process gone for you?

ANDY ENFIELD: A head coach is only as good as his coaching staff and his players. I have, I think, the best coaching staff in America, and we have just tremendous players. So you hire better people than you are as a head coach. But recruiting is sales. We have a top 15 institution. USC just got ranked 15th in the country a week and a half ago by one of the national polls, the Wall Street Journal. It's in the heart of Los Angeles. We have a great talent base in Southern California. And who wouldn't want to come to the warm weather and play at USC? So it's a program that we felt we could develop and compete for a Pac-12 National Championship, and to do that, you have to go to the NCAA Tournament. And we were fortunate enough to do that last year because of players like Elijah and his teammates.

Q. Elijah, around college basketball 35% of shots last year were three-pointers, and you took a lot of those, so you probably contributed to that stat. How do you think it's maybe increased scoring and made the game more exciting? Is there anything to big men being more skilled that allows teams to shoot threes?

ELIJAH STEWART: Yeah, nowadays you see the big men kind of starting to just like step outside the arc. We have a good shooter in Bennie Boatwright coming from the small forward. He's just like really talented. And we have a lot of other talented bigs who can shoot from beyond the arc in the Pac-12. Just determining the type of offense that you play, it just helps with the threes. Our offense is kind of a run-and-gun three-point offense.

Q. You guys had a lot of guys back last year, and it looked like you would this year, and you had a guy transfer and go to the NBA. Is it harder these days to get nine, ten guys to come back because maybe

that ninth guy looks around to see someplace where he can be the number five guy and still be a starter? Is it harder to keep a class together for two or three years to build just because of options for them to do other things?

ANDY ENFIELD: As you look around college basketball, 7- or 800 transfers in Division I level. So it's an average of over two per team. So it's a natural progression of players. For a lack of playing time or better opportunities for their personal career. As coaches, I can never blame a player for leaving if they think another situation is better for them. You have 13 scholarships at the Division I basketball level. So you can only play nine or ten in a rotation. You have some transfers that sit out. So I think the natural attrition rate is about right. You're two to three per team per year. Sometimes you can't plan for certain transfers, especially players leaving early for the NBA Draft. Some you can plan for, but you just don't know when that will be.

So it's hard to recruit in the springtime at this level, because most of the players are signed, the high school seniors are all signed in November, and a few of the elite players will wait till the spring, and then the JUCOs and the grad transfers. So it's hard to just lose really good basketball players late that you don't plan for.

Now we lost a couple two players to the NBA Draft early, but the nice thing for our program is we had some returnees that were talented, and we still think we can compete.

Q. You mentioned the two guys you left early, they've both been cut already and didn't make an opening day roster. Do you feel like are there ways that guys are getting bad advice? I assume those are ones you didn't expect? Do you talk to those guys now or show it to other guys going forward that, hey, before you go, make sure you don't end up like these two?

ANDY ENFIELD: Julian Jacobs and Nikola Jovanovic were huge parts of our program. They were juniors last year. Julian was First Team All-Pac-12, led the league in assists. Nikola averaged 12 points and seven rebounds. He was our starting center. So we really value their contributions to our program. They did an outstanding job for us. They're part of our family. We wish them the best.

They made their own decisions to move on and become draft picks, and unfortunately for both they did not get drafted. Signed on as free agents for training camp and did not make the teams. So they'll have to fight their way back to the NBA their own route. An individual decision. As coaches and staff, we just try to

present the evidence and what we hear from the NBA to them, and they have to make their own decisions, and we wish them the best.