

PAC-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Thursday, October 12 2017

Andy Enfield

USC Trojans



ANDY ENFIELD: Good morning. It's great to be here. Brought two amazing student-athletes with us today. Jordan McLaughlin, who graduated in three years. He's taking graduate classes. He's been a three-year captain. And one of our junior captains, Bennie Boatwright. We're happy to have those guys on the trip here for Pac-12 Media Day.

We're excited about our team, about our program. We have amazing upperclassmen. As I just mentioned, Jordan and Bennie; Elijah Stewart is now a senior; Chimezie Metu, a junior; Shaququan Aaron, a junior transfer.

But as a staff, this is our fifth year as a staff. We've been together for five years. I have a terrific coaching staff and, as I stated the last two years, as you build a program, you're only as good as your players and coaches. We're very fortunate to have a terrific coaching staff and outstanding student-athletes. They've performed in the classroom, they're well liked on USC's campus and in the community, and of course they've been to two straight NCAA Tournaments and have a chance this year to continue that. Obviously, nothing is guaranteed because they have to go perform.

We have a lot of good younger players. We have a great recruiting class. We're excited about our freshmen and our returning sophomores. We also have a transfer, Derryck Thornton, from Duke. He's our second transfer with Shaququan that's eligible this year.

We have a lot of returning players. I think someone gave me the statistic, 98% of our scoring from last year is back, and hopefully we have a high percentage of our defense back, but we're going to have to improve on that if we're going to rise up in the rankings on a national scale.

So we're excited about all our players. It's the first time we've had a full roster of 13 scholarship athletes, and it's more of an even distribution between seniors, juniors, sophomore and freshmen, which is nice as a program to be able to walk in the gym and see guys that have been there with you a few years, and also the newcomers that are the future of USC basketball.

So with that, we'll take any questions.

Q. Coach, I had the pleasure of watching four of your players play in the Drew League (indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: The Drew League is an excellent summer league in Los Angeles that has professional athletes, overseas pros and college players as well as some awesome high school players. It's very competitive, it's well-run, and our players get a lot out of it.

It's fun to watch them develop. They get to play against some of the guys that they see on TV and in the NBA and where they're trying to get to also to have a camaraderie among the local community.

Q. What's it like (indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, it's very easy. When you walk in the gym, we're a family at USC basketball, and we have terrific student-athletes on our team. So they're focused, we're focused as a staff and a team.

As the program, we're trying to prepare our team to start the season November 10th. We're excited. So we have things we have to accomplish, and we have to stay focused.

Q. One of your assistants was charged with accepting bribes, \$13,000, funneling money to recruits. Did you know about it at all? When did you know about it?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, I found out when everybody else did, but other than that, I just can't comment on the investigation. It's ongoing. Tony Bland has been with us four and a half years. He's part of our USC program and USC family. And we all love Tony. It's very difficult on a personal level, it's very difficult on a program level because we all had great relationships with each other.

So when someone leaves your family, it's very hard on all of us and very emotional and challenging. Everyone on our team and coaching staff handles those emotions differently. But at the same time, we've been able to rely on each other and talk about it. We've been there for each other.

So we're going to go on and try to prepare for the season. Obviously, we have to get through this part of it, but it is emotional and challenging.

Q. I realize you can't comment on the investigation itself, but in a general sense, do you think a head coach should know about something like that, if a massive tran- -- \$13,000 seems like a lot of money to me. Do you think a head coach should know about it?

ANDY ENFIELD: I'm not going to comment on it. I've been instructed as far as the ongoing investigation.

Q. Along those lines, Larry Scott just launched a task force from the conference. He's made his stance pretty clear on not tolerating certain issues such as this. Do you applaud that move by the conference to find ways to not let this happen?

ANDY ENFIELD: Sure. We're all for the betterment of our game of basketball. We're all in this together as coaches, players, universities. Anything that can be done from a conference level, from an NCAA perspective, a national level to help everybody and advance the game of college basketball, we're all for that and we encourage that.

Q. How embarrassing is this for you? There is a blemish as you come to Media Day; focus is on this and not on your team.

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, our focus is on the student-athletes. They've done an amazing job the last few years of elevating our program, having the highest team GPA in USC basketball history three times. They broke their own records. Virtually a perfect APR score because our kids are so committed to the academic side. They've been to two straight NCAA Tournaments when a lot of people didn't think they would get there. Now they've put themselves in a position to be recognized as a talented team coming back.

So that's what we're focused on. I can't say enough about our student-athletes. They are so much fun to coach. When we walk in the gym every day, that's our time, and we thoroughly enjoy it.

Q. Are all your players practicing right now? If that's the case, can you explain how, just given the allegations from the F.B.I. investigation?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yes, we have a full roster of players right now, and they're all doing well. They're healthy and they're getting better.

Q. (Indiscernible) pulling a couple guys off the floor in light of the allegations there that (indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: Believe it or not, it's ongoing, and I just don't know and can't comment on certain things

that I don't have knowledge of or I'm not allowed to comment on.

Q. When young coaches come talk to you about (Indiscernible), do you ever have honest conversations about you can win at this level and sometimes that can make you do questionable things?

ANDY ENFIELD: I think there is pressure in any business.

Q. But being paid like \$7 million dollars a year to win?

ANDY ENFIELD: I don't think very many people in our business are being paid that kind of money either. But my point is there is pressure in any business. There is pressure in families. There is pressure in anything you do in life. It's how you handle that pressure. It doesn't matter how much money you make. That's not the issue. It's how you handle your day-to-day life. And you're going to have pressure situations. Nothing's perfect in life.

We have a basketball family at USC, and we handle that internally. Each individual person on our staff and team handles pressure differently. They handle pressure and emotions differently. But we try to handle certain things together because we rely on each other, and I would expect you do that in your personal life and also your professional life. So that's what we're going through right now, and we're trying our best.

Q. You have maybe the best team you've had at USC, probably the best team you've had at USC coming back, and obviously every question or almost every question here has been related to the scandal. But is it frustrating? Is it what you expect? How is that emotion for you?

ANDY ENFIELD: My first coaching job was 23 years ago, so when you say "what do you expect," of course this is what I expect. However, it's how you handle this. We're trying our best. We have great kids in our program. So you're going to make the focus about something else, but really the focus, in my eyes, is on our kids because that's what college basketball is all about. It's about student-athletes.

I coached in the NBA. Your focus in the NBA is different than when you become a college coach and you're part of a college campus and a college program. These kids are 18 to 23 years old. We're trying to get them to graduate. Every kid in our program is on pace to graduate. We've had three student-athletes graduate in three years -- Nick Rakocevic; Jordan McLaughlin, who is out taking graduate classes; and Chimezie Metu is going to graduate this year in three years.

That's impressive in a school like USC, which is ranked top 25 academically in the United States, to have three players in three consecutive years graduate a year early, and all of our other players are on pace or ahead of schedule to graduate on time.

That's what's so exciting about being part of this college game and this college program. Because you see the growth and success of players that you bring in as recruits. You watch them, you mentor them, and you help them. But at the end of the day, they succeed because of who they are and how much hard work they put in.

So that's what I get out of this, and that's what we're focused on, because these guys deserve the credit.

Q. What's been your message to your players and dealing with these questions going forward this season? Presumably they're not going to go away through Las Vegas and the Pac-12 Tournament.

ANDY ENFIELD: We have a job to do, and that is get ready for the season. It starts November 10, and that's what we're focused on. Our players and our staff are all clear about that. We don't discuss anything but how to make our players and our program better, and they're working like crazy to do that.

Q. If he's cleared from a legal standpoint, would you welcome him back on your staff?

ANDY ENFIELD: Once again, I just can't. There are so many things that I don't know, and I can't say anything about the investigations. It's ongoing, and I've been instructed not to do that.

I know you have a job to do, and I respect that. You guys are great -- for the most part you're great (laughing) -- but hopefully you have an understanding where I just can't say things like that.

Q. Did you promote someone to fill in?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, Martin Bahar was with us for three years. He's a graduate of scouting. He's done a lot of our video work and an assistant coach on two staffs. So we've bumped him up here for the time being, and we'll see how it goes. Hopefully we don't miss a beat because he's very experienced, very good with our players and knows our program.

Q. So do you keep bumping people up, or is that (indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: We haven't hired anybody new. If that's what you're looking for. We haven't hired anybody new, but we're very confident in our entire staff -- Jason Hart, Chris Capko, Mike Swets, Kurtis Shultz, Jon Yonamine. They're all terrific people. Even

(indiscernible), our second year with us.

So we're a big tight-knit family, and they're excellent to work with.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: He has assistant coaching experience, so it's a seamless transition because he knows our program and he's in our office. Right now we're not at a place I want to hire anyone new. It's going to go with who is in our program and knows our players and our system.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: Correct. Yes, and he's doing a great job.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: I have not.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

ANDY ENFIELD: It's an unbalanced schedule in the Pac-12 season, and -- like every year. And, sure, we'd love to have the Arizona schools, play them at home, but that's not the case.

So we focus on who we play. Tell you what, even without them, the league is really good. Top to bottom, it's exceptional. So we'll have our hands full whoever and wherever we play.

Q. The chemistry on this team is off the charts right now. So what are you doing as a coach to help with the chemistry and the players coming in?

ANDY ENFIELD: We just give them a platform to succeed. They have to develop their own relationships. We encourage them to have that type of relationship. But they have to develop it and forward it. It's fun to watch. They're great kids.

Q. You've been, like I said, asked about this probably all season. Are you having to deal with this when you're talking to parents of either current players or recruits? Is it the same thing, you tell them "we can't talk about it"?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yes, there are certain things I just cannot say.

Q. But you are being asked about it by families, is what I'm curious about.

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, I think that would be -- there are certain questions that people ask and I can answer, and there are certain questions I cannot answer.