

PAC-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 8 2019

Bobby Hurley

Arizona State Sun Devils



BOBBY HURLEY: Thanks for having us here. We're very excited to be here in San Francisco with everyone, and having a great day. Just sharing our program with everyone. It's been a fun and busy day, and happy that Remy Martin and Rob Edwards could join me. I'll open it up to any questions you might have.

Q. What about the identity of this year's team, what do you expect it to be?

BOBBY HURLEY: What is the identity of this year's team? We're still, I think, in the process of determining that each day in practice. We do have a strong core of returning players that have now been at consecutive NCAA tournaments, so there's a good expectation of winning a lot of basketball games. So that's a good feeling for a coach to bring back players like Rob Edwards, Remy Martin, Kimani Lawrence, Romello White, who looks fantastic, and Taeshon Cherry, and then we've added some solid guys, as well.

I think we'll resemble more of what my team was like two years ago than last year's team. I think we had a little more physical dominant way about how we could rebound and defend, and losing Zylan Cheatham and Lu Dort, we've added some different guys that I think will make us a little bit more guard oriented, a more dangerous team in terms of being able to score the ball in a variety of ways and just have some positional versatility with our roster and some big wings, also, to go along with the smaller guards. And again, Romello White has had a great offseason. I expect him to have a big year.

Q. Rob Edwards missing a lot of games with the back injury. How much are you looking forward to having him full strength the whole year, having that three-point shooting that adds to your team?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, he was phenomenal, again, two years ago when he was sitting out, I was just like champing at the bit to want to get him in. And just all last year, to his credit, he didn't talk about it, but he pushed through some back pain and stiffness and wasn't himself and just didn't have the time to make it right. But he's had -- we addressed it in the off-season. There's no one that works harder on their game, that's more disciplined in taking care of their body, and it's just great to see him happy and out on the floor,

moving freely. He had a play in our lay-up line where he threw it off the backboard and it was way over the rim dunking it, and I don't remember seeing that too often last year.

So I'm excited for Rob and the season he could have.

Q. Is this Remy's team?

BOBBY HURLEY: I don't get into like whose team it is. I'm not like that type of coach where I declare someone is in charge of the team. It's more a group effort, collaborative effort. I think the best teams I've had have been dangerous at multiple positions.

I think Remy certainly has earned the right to have a strong voice in the locker room because of what he's accomplished on our team and being a guy that's projected to be an all-league player coming in. He set a good tone in our off-season training program for how hard he's worked, and it's a good example coming into the program about how we operate.

Q. Romello always talks this time of year about extending his range. Is he still kind of in that 15, 16-foot area?

BOBBY HURLEY: With Romello I haven't told him he can't shoot a jump shot yet, so that's where we're at with that.

I think he's added more of a comfortability with facing up in the mid-post and not strictly being a back-to-the-basket guy. So he's going to get a lot of touches in that way, and if teams back off, I have confidence in him shooting it. He's worked very hard on it in the off-season, and I would expect that would translate into increased free-throw percentage for him, as well, because I think he's going to get to the free-throw line.

Q. What are your thoughts on starting the season in China, and how does that kind of change maybe your preseason routine, seeing as you're going to have to go to China, like a lot more travel early on?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, there's a little more urgency in our practices, just trying to get our system in place more and throwing more at our players to really hopefully they retain what we need to get done. It's kind of like losing a week almost in terms of practice time with all the travel.

That's an issue. We've been able to get off to a very fast start in the non-conference the last two years, and we're hoping to continue that trend. So we just -- we can't afford to lose days. We've just got to make sure we're productive every day.

Q. Who are a couple guys not named Edwards or Martin that you need to step up?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, I think we're going to be very balanced on offense, and I could see a scenario where there's six guys in double figures. I think we're going to score a lot of points. I think we could score enough points that that's a realistic possibility. Players that have come in, new guys, Alonzo Verge is making a strong impression on everybody in our workouts. There were days in our gym where he might have been the best guard I've had since I've been at ASU, just watching how much he got done in a session, just for how talented he was and the variety of ways he could create and make shots and create plays for his teammates. So I just have high hopes for Alonzo Verge.

And then Jaalen House is another guy that's got a ton of energy who's got a great pedigree. His dad was a hell of a player for ASU, and he's always just played against really good teams and good competition in high school. So he's ready for the college level, and I think he'll have a chance to make an impact with our guard corps.

Q. Does the change in the three-point line affect you offensively at all?

BOBBY HURLEY: I think it's a positive for us. I think it's going to depend team to team based on how well they can shoot it. I think we'll be vastly improved shooting from a distance from last year's team, just with -- I'm hopeful Taeshon Cherry continues to look as good as he works in workouts, and he's got the ability at the 4 to really stretch the defense as well as Kimani Lawrence. And there's not a guard that I'm going to put in the game that can't shoot from the added distance of the new college three-point line. So hopefully it opens the floor, and my guards can get in the paint more effectively.

Q. No Kansas on the schedule this year unfortunately so no automatic chance at a big win unless you get the opportunity at Virginia. How do you feel overall about the way you scheduled, and obviously playing in Dayton the last two years, it's probably been a big topic of conversation?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, I just think top to bottom hopefully we're more committed as a league to take care of business in the non-conference and do a better job across the board of getting quality wins. We'll try and get whatever quality wins we can to bring into

conference play, and that's going to help everybody, I'm sure. I'm not the first one to say that.

Usually you win 22 games, and you get 12 wins in your league, and you shouldn't be in Dayton, you should be an 8 seed.

Hopefully we'll do a better job of that across the board, and we won't be in that position.

Q. Jalen Graham came on pretty strong in his high school class. How is he?

BOBBY HURLEY: Sidelined here in the short-term with an ankle. It's not too severe, but he's probably another 10 days away from getting back into our practices. But again, he made a strong impression over the summer and is very active. I could see him being a guy that goes after the ball, blocks shots, rebounds, and he can finish.

So we're happy with Jalen and his progress.

Q. I've been doing my own survey of coaches and talking about social media policies. Do you have one for your players? Is there anything that -- do you make them put their phones away before games or kind of how do you deal with the criticism that they can receive via social media?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, we have some training that we do with our sports information, just to talk about social media, and it's like your own independent press conference, so just be careful what you say, you've got to own it once you tweet it or put it on Instagram. And then, yeah, we have some just general things to try and avoid saying and hope that the guys follow our team rules regarding social media.

Q. How is it different than in your playing days?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, it's more pressure on all our athletes, our student-athletes, just with -- you miss a shot, it's immediate, and then someone might be tweeting at you. It's tough for those guys to handle that. My advice is just to not look at it, try and avoid it as much as you can.

Q. Are you kind of glad that you didn't have to do that --

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, it's more of a microscope for them, and it's more personal, and more people can reach them than could ever reach me when I played. Bad game, I just kind of went back to my dorm and I might have had a few messages on my answering machine or something, like, why did you play so bad or something, but yeah, I didn't have to deal with what our guys have to deal with now.

Q. Tempo-wise, are you going to change at all, or is

this team maybe present some challenges that way, maybe open up the floor, play a little bit quicker?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, I mean, I think our guards are built to play in transition, play in a fast game, and get up and down the floor. Like I said, you put a lot of guys who can get up and down the floor and who can shoot the ball, then you have a lot of options.

And then we do have a guy I think we throw the ball to inside in Romello White, just the way he looks and what he's doing in our workouts that I think we're going to have enough balance that we'll be able to attack in a variety of ways.

Q. You talked about it before, but how did it happen that you've gotten off to these great starts because people are talking about changing their schedule now and it's so important to play well in November. You guys basically have been the prototype for that. By design or --

BOBBY HURLEY: You know, I think two years ago we did the foreign tour in the prior summer, which really helped. We were able to get a lot of practices in in July, and we had guys who were fed up with losing, basically, myself included, Shannon Evans, Tra Holder, and that's kind of -- we kind of built off that momentum, and then we had Zylan Cheatham and Rob Edwards sitting out and we brought in Lu Dort, so we didn't really miss a beat. When you have guys who now believe that's what we should be doing, it's in their nature to expect that and to put the work in to want to do it.

I wish I could give you a more clear reason like why. I guess we're 21-3 in two years, but that's a pretty strong non-conference resume.

Q. Did the guard thing, was there an evolution there, or was it by design -- you could make a case, your family has had two pretty good yards. Did you go in wanting good guards?

BOBBY HURLEY: I just hoped it was one of my strengths to try and identify what I look for in a guard, and everyone has their own preferences, and I think that's the first step is being able to identify guys that you really want to coach, that fit how you want to play and what your vision is for how we play. I've kind of leaned towards fast guards who could penetrate and shoot, and Lu Dort was kind of an anomaly, like this guy is a freak specimen and physical, and I thought he would fit in nicely, too, so I made an exception for him, being a bigger, stronger guard.

But yeah, I've had two point guards at Buffalo at work there and getting to the Tournament, and I just thought it would be something -- it's a good place to start in

college basketball to have good guard play --

Q. There may be guys that want to play for you because of the way you played and the way you coach your guys.

BOBBY HURLEY: I mean, from a style standpoint, they go in prepared with structure, but I try not to overcomplicate things, and rarely are they looking over their shoulder unless it's an effort issue. It's not because they might have taken a borderline shot. I live with some stuff because I trust them. I trust the work they put in. And then I want them to play freely. I want -- that's how I was given the freedom as a player, and that's kind of what I gravitated to.

Q. What's the next step for Rob this year? What's Rob's -- I know the upside is there, but what is the key for him this year?

BOBBY HURLEY: I just think he's going to be more consistent because I think, first of all, he's injury-free and he feels good. I think he's got the chance to put a lot of points on the board for us, but I've noticed also him making an impact defensively, using his strength and his size. That's something that he could really tap into that could help our team because, again, I'm not too concerned about scoring, and I do think we need to improve defensively big-time here in the next few weeks, and I'm glad that I'm seeing that from Rob at that end of the floor, taking more responsibility because Dort would take the best offensive player most nights and then Zylan would take the best front-court guy. So we need guys to be able to replace those guys from a defensive standpoint.

Q. It feels like Remy has been there almost as long as Doug and yet he's only a junior. He's been there so long, it's amazing. Just because from day one he's been a factor for you guys.

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, I still -- I watched our Kansas game at Kansas and just watched how good he was in that game and just stealing the ball from those guys and driving to the hoop and scoring and hitting big threes. He's got a signature flex and he plays with just so much raw passion and energy that -- so yeah, I'm glad he's still around, though. He's got a couple years with me. I don't want him to go yet.

Q. To get where you want to be at the end of the year, the NCAA Tournament, what's the one thing you feel your team has to do in order to get there?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, there's so many things that go into that, so that's a tough one just to specify --

Q. You mentioned --

BOBBY HURLEY: I think rebounding. I talk about rebounding every year, and I didn't really rebound at all when I played, so it's ironic I talk about rebounding all

the time (laughter), but two years ago I didn't know if we could get a rebound because we were so small. Last year I thought we should get every rebound because we had guys who were playing two feet over the basket, and this year I'm hoping we can get a rebound.

So it's a cycle again. So I think that'll be the one area that game to game I'm going to be really just instilling a desire from everyone to rebound the ball.