

PAC-12 Men's Basketball Media Day

Tuesday, October 8 2019

Andy Enfield

USC Trojans



ANDY ENFIELD: We're excited for another season. Our team is unique this year. We have eight new players, five freshmen, two graduate transfers, and one sit-out transfer. So it's a whole new team from last season, and we obviously have four returning key players with Jonah Mathews, Nick Rakocovic, Elijah Weaver and Chuck O'Bannon. So we're ready to get going.

Q. How have you seen the level of talent kind of increase over the years, and just looking at the recruiting rankings recently, it looks like Pac-12 schools have really done well in that department, USC included.

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, I think the Pac-12 brought a lot of new fresh faces in here, very, very talented freshmen walking in the door, can affect a lot of playing time on a variety of teams. We happen to have five of them. Our freshmen will play a lot of minutes for us. You look around the league, they're McDonald's All-Americans, they're top-100 recruits in the country and a lot of good players from winning program.

Q. You have one of those McDonald's All-Americans. How is Mobley looking in practice so far?

ANDY ENFIELD: Isaiah Mobley is coming off of foot surgery in the spring, missed about four months, missed our foreign tour in August, but he now is getting his timing back. He's been cleared, and so he has about three or four weeks of being able to participate in all our drills, and he looks very good right now, but we expect by the time the season starts, he should be 100 percent.

Q. What are your expectations for him when he gets to full strength?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, we expect him to help us. He's very skilled with the basketball in his hands. He's a great passer, very cerebral player, and he's very unselfish. He's also a big time rebounder and shot blocker.

Q. I believe he was on the honorable mention All-Pac-12, hasn't played a game yet. How do you feel about a guy being labeled as such without even having played a college game? Do you like that?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, I think a lot of freshmen are on all-conference teams, honorable mention, first, second team around the country. That's -- it's nice to have talented freshmen. We have another freshman Onyeka Okongwu, we like Isaiah, are supposedly five-star bigs in the recruiting rankings coming out of high school. So both those young men will play a lot of minutes for us.

The preseason rankings and the all-conference teams don't mean anything. At the end of the day it's about helping your team win, and we expect both our big men as well as our other freshmen to help us.

Q. Going into the 20-game conference schedule, do you like that, because two years ago I know you didn't play Arizona at home and that could have been a game that got you into the NCAA Tournament, in theory. Are you in favor of this to maybe help balance out the schedule and the resume?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, a 20-game schedule certainly helps. It prevents from missing key opponents throughout the league schedule. We still have two teams that we only play -- actually four teams we only play once. But I think this year or in 2021 we'll only have two.

I'm a proponent of it, and I think it'll help our league in the long run.

Q. Do you know Mick Cronin at all?

ANDY ENFIELD: Mick is a very good basketball coach, nice guy. We don't know each other that well but getting to know each other. I'm impressed with what he did throughout his coaching career, and we're happy to welcome him to Los Angeles and obviously the UCLA-USC rivalry has been terrific for the fans for a century. So we'll hopefully continue that.

Q. I know you talked about preseason rankings not mattering, but how do you feel about where you were picked in the Pac-12?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, we were picked fifth, which means we have some talented basketball players, but as I said before, we don't really read into the preseason rankings. I think about three years ago we were picked 11th or 12th, and we came and we went to the NCAA Tournament that year, and I think the only year that the media had it -- that we finished where they picked up

was two years ago, they picked us second and we ended up finishing second in the league.

It's very rare that you finish where you're picked in the preseason. But I guess that being picked fifth means we have some good basketball players on our team.

Q. With everything what's going on down at USC, and I don't want to get into specifics, but with the new president, no athletic director, how hard is it to keep focused on what you need to do?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, we have a new president, Dr. Carol Folt, comes from North Carolina, which is obviously a big basketball school, a new AD will be named hopefully sooner than later. I've been fortunate to work with great people over the years in the administration, been supportive of men's basketball. However, it is challenging with the turnover, and we just have to do our best. We're focused on what our program does.

I was hired as a head coach to run our program, and I have a great staff that does that with me, and really appreciative of how our players have responded with all the changes. We're focused on what our job is and what we have to do, and I'm sure the university will fill in the necessary employment and hire the right people to carry us into the next few years.

Q. Is it hard to keep it away and just keep focused?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, there is a lot of -- you see a lot of the media attention that our school has received. But it's nice to have a president in place now, the new athletic director will come on soon. So it's not easy to turn out all the attention, but once again, we're focused at the Galen Center across campus on what we have to do.

Q. Will your tempo be the same with this team? You've got a lot of new guys, nice nucleus coming back. Will you change your thought to maybe adapt to all the new talent?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, our tempo, we try to play fast. We try to steal the ball, block shots and get out and run. Two years ago we were very good defensively. We led the league in the least amount of points in league games, and last year we took a step back because we didn't have the rim protection. Now we have three bigs that can protect the basket. We also have some exceptional length and quickness on the perimeter. So we think we can be a much better defensive team and get that transition game going, and then we also have some very good shooters. We have a very good shooting team to space the floor and play our style of basketball.

We have the ability to play big and small or in between

this year because of our three bigs and our perimeter shooting.

Q. What are you expecting from Quinton? When you have a grad transfer, is it different -- I don't even relate to it. Does that translate from watching practice a couple weeks, what you saw is what you get?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, we had the advantage of going overseas. We had 10 practices in August, played three games in Spain and France, and then we've had seven or eight practices so far this fall, and Quinton Adlesh from Columbia from Danny Utomi from Akron, two grad transfers, played there produced at the college level. Quinton averaged 13 points a game last year, I think Daniel averaged 14 points and six rebounds. To have two experienced guys that have been there, four years of college, have their degree, they're mature physically, they're mature mentally and they're professionals when they step on the court, they've been a huge addition to our program not only from a talent perspective but how they conduct their business on a day-to-day basis.

Q. When you put the schedule together were you able to do it with guys who left from last year, did that go into the schedule or was the schedule already kind of there? It seems fortunate the way it worked out having that summer preparation.

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, well, we knew after losing some key guys to the NBA early, also some transfers, that we needed some veterans to come in and help us because we had a big freshman recruiting class because we didn't think -- first of all, we needed 10 players to practice so we had to go get a couple. But we were scheduled to go to the NCAA Tournament like we have every season, and we have a challenging schedule this year with some good out of conference games and of course with the league going to the teams we play in the league this year, we factored that in. We have a challenging schedule to go to the NCAA Tournament.

Q. What do you tell Nick or what have you told Nick? What's the challenge for Nick this year? He's already established himself obviously as a quality player, but what does he need to do to take the next step for you, not beyond USC?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, Nick Rakocovic is an all-league type player, voted first-team all-league here in the preseason. But he has to prove that. What we're looking Nick is lead by example on and off the court and give us consistency, and I think last year the reason he wasn't named first or second-team all-league is because of his consistency. He'd have some great games and then not so -- a few games where he struggled a little bit for a variety of reasons.

He's a talent. He's one of leaders. He's been with us four years. He's played in the NCAA Tournament a few times. He's played Pac-12 championship, so he's been there. Now he needs to be a leader and take us to where we haven't gone before, so we're looking forward to that.

Q. What's gone into this recent recruiting success that you've had, and how do you sustain it?

ANDY ENFIELD: The recruiting success we've had, I have a terrific staff, and you have to look at them, they've done a tremendous job of selling the USC basketball program and Southern California and around the country now based on our success the last three or four years. As the head coach you're only as good as your staff, and that goes into recruiting, because we have to go into the living rooms of recruits and their families and sell what we have to offer them, not only from an academic standpoint, but athletic and off the court, and our job as basketball coaches is to get these 18, 19-year-olds and hopefully mentor them and mold them into guys that are set up for success when they graduate.

Q. Have you become more national in scope or would you say it's stayed about the same?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, out of our five-man freshman class, four are from Southern California. Kyle Sturdivant is from Atlanta. He's also a top 100 player, very good player. We focus on Southern California but based on our success the last few years, we're now able to go around the country, and we do have players from Las Vegas, from Florida, we had some Seattle players recently. We do recruit nationally, but I would say probably 50 to 60 percent of our roster will always be California players.

Q. How important is it to have guys like Nick Rakocovic and Jonah Mathews as you transition to having a younger roster with all the freshmen, and how do you think their leadership is going to help with their transition to the college game?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, Nick and Jonah have been consistent players for three seasons. As I just mentioned, they played in the NCAA Tournament, they've been in the Pac-12 championship game. So they have experience, and they know what a winning team looks like. So for them to pass that on for the younger players, our younger players have never played a college game yet. It's important to understand the level of consistency and how hard you have to work on a daily basis, and we're looking for Jonah and Nick to teach other younger players that, and that's why the two grad transfers help, as well.

Q. Do you like it when UCLA is good?

ANDY ENFIELD: Of course. We think Los Angeles is

the best basketball city in the United States, the biggest market, now we have two NBA teams with some superstars on it, the Lakers and Clippers, UCLA, they have a great coach and some very, very good players. Our job is just to keep up with everybody else in the city.

With the AAU and the high school teams around the city and around the Southern California area, we think LA is a hotbed for basketball.

Q. Everybody is saying, and I think rightfully so, that the Pac-12 is better, but you have a much better perspective than outside people. How different do you think right now going in compared to the last couple years, looking at the 12 schools collectively?

ANDY ENFIELD: I think the Pac-12 has positioned itself now with the influx of talent to have a better out of conference season this year and carry that into the league.

I think you'll see very, very competitive games once the league starts, but the key for us is to get off to an out of conference start to win some of those key games across our conference.

Q. You may have answered this already, but I'll ask it anyway. With the three-point line moved out, do you think you'll see more zones now or will you attack differently? Are you going to go inside a little bit more or just play the same way?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, it'll be interesting to see what the three-point distance does to percentages. I personally believe that the great shooters will shoot about the same percentage, but I do think that the marginal shooters and some of the forwards and the big men that shouldn't be shooting a lot of threes, I think their percentages will go down because it is a significant difference. And so back in the NBA when I was coaching, I was part of the -- I was there when they experimented from the 23'9" and made it 22 feet all the way around, and our line now is 22, one and three quarters. So there's a big difference between 22 feet and 23'9" and what we've had last year and what they've made it now.

It'll be very interesting to see how if you can differentiate not from a team shooting percentage but also some of the guards versus the forwards versus the big men that think they're good shooters.

Q. Do you think you'll see more zone?

ANDY ENFIELD: I don't know if we'll see more zone, but I do think that a challenged three from this distance is a much tougher shot.

Q. Does anyone on your roster go from green light to red light with this distance?

ANDY ENFIELD: Green light to red light, that's earned in practice and in games. We give our players a lot of freedom, but at the same time there comes responsibility.

Q. It's what you do maybe better than anything; will you shoot more because of the line? More time in practice or to drill that specifically, or it's still the same three-point line in your players' minds?

ANDY ENFIELD: Yeah, I think you spend part of your practice on shooting drills, and we rely on before practice the individual development and after practice to get the volume shots up, and then we do the game shooting within practice.

I can't say that we're going to shoot a ton more on a per day or per week basis, but I think the great shooters are going to be able to shoot -- they can shoot from that distance pretty easily.