

HARDWORKING & ACCOUNTABLE

By: Zac Lambert



Tyrone Corbin leads the Jazz in his first full season as head coach.

Photos: NBA Photos

Tyrone Corbin knows as well as anyone how much work there is to do during an offseason for an NBA assistant coach. The countless hours of preparation, planning for the NBA Draft and the upcoming season, and taking assignments from the head coach are all part of the summer schedule for an NBA assistant.

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Corbin found out, rather quickly, back on February 10, 2011 when he was named the new head coach of the Utah Jazz, that the labor intensifies twofold once you are the man in charge.

“There’s no comparison whatsoever,” Corbin said, while laughing, after being asked if the workload as an assistant is anything like that of a head coach. “You have so many more demands on you.

Your personal appearances, the media part of it, reporters – just to continue to sell and build the franchise. Time-wise, it’s not even close to what it was as an assistant.”

While assistants do a lot of work and are critical for success, the head coach of an NBA team always has the final say on every decision. “I had to get ready for everything. As an assistant, you come in and have input and see what can be implemented or not,” Corbin said. “As a head coach, you get a chance to put your staple on everything. You

listen to what your assistants bring and then you decide what you think is best and will match up to your vision for the entire team.”

While there are several built-in challenges to any head coach’s first offseason, Corbin’s included one more hurdle that made it even tougher – the NBA lockout.

During the work stoppage, coaching staffs and players weren’t allowed to communicate. Trying to coach a team that you can’t see or talk to is a bit of a challenge. “It helped us in preparation, but we maybe over-analyzed things a little bit,” Corbin said, reflecting on the extra time he and his staff had this past offseason.

Fortunately for Coach Corbin and the rest of the NBA, the over-analyzing stopped when the lockout officially ended on December 8. After the announcement, teams across the league quickly scrambled to start training camps and begin preparing for a 66-game schedule.

With a core group of young and talented players, the addition of two new rookies and a couple of veterans, and a new-look coaching staff with Tyrone Corbin at the helm, the Jazz has a lot of questions waiting to be answered in the 2011-12 season.

“The first thing we want to find out is who we are,” Corbin said. “We need to get an identity, find out what we want to do, get organized and get the guys on the same page as soon as we can. It’s going to be a rat race for us for a little bit, but the sooner we can get everybody on the same page, the better chance we have to be successful sooner.”

After a strong start, the Jazz struggled during the second-half of the 2010-11 season and missed the playoffs for just the first time in the last five seasons. Tyrone Corbin got a firsthand-look of those struggles from the Jazz sideline.

“The disappointing number is we were 8-20 the last 28 games,” Corbin said. “It’s not all bad in those

numbers. We had some moments. The energy we played with at the end and the identity we tried to create is going to be of great value going forward.”

Coach Corbin is focused on making sure there are no lingering effects from the undesirable finish last season, especially with how much tighter the playoff race will be in a 66-game schedule.

“You’ve got to be ready coming out of it because no one is going to feel sorry for you so you can’t feel sorry for yourself,” Corbin said. “My mom never made excuses. She never allowed us to make excuses. You came where you came from but you can pick yourself up if you work your way through it.”

Many are wondering what to expect from the Jazz this season. Corbin, however, has set high expectations for his team going forward.

“I thought the honeymoon period was last year. The fans and everybody understood there were a

lot of changes, especially for us here,” Corbin said. “It was a tough situation, but like I tell the guys, you’re still expected to play and compete. I expect us to be competitive. What number that is, I don’t know, but I expect us to be competitive every night we step on the floor.”

“It’s a great opportunity,” Corbin said. “I can’t be any more pleased than anybody of the opportunity that’s facing us. We’ve got a good group of guys that I’m excited about. I’m excited to get everybody on the floor and get to work. I hope they’re excited about having a chance to just compete.”

On his overall goal for the season, Corbin says that it is more about how his team plays every night.

“I want this team to be a hard-working, self-accountable group of guys that just go out and compete every minute that we’re on the floor. If we do that, everything else will take care of itself.” ■

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