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Utah Jazz: Alec Burks taking summer seriously to meet his expectations

By Jarrod Rudolph For the Deseret News

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Alec Burks' 31 points helped lift the Jazz to an 84-80 Orlando Summer League victory over Philadelphia on Tuesday. (All, Jarrod Rudolph)

Alec Burks is a good basketball player. It's not hard to understand why the Utah Jazz selected him with the 12th pick of the 2011 NBA draft.

He has the ability to score, pass and defend at a pro level. Burks proved that he belonged in the NBA, playing well in his 59 appearances last season. In a truncated season, the rookie progressively improved in a year that was more difficult than the typical NBA season.

Some say Burks, in his first season, has shown flashes of a player that could one day be an All-Star.

He's already learned to how to find a positive out of a negative, learning from the hectic lockout season.

"It was a learning experience," Burks said. "Getting in at three in the morning and having a game the next day.

"Things have slowed down for me. There was a lot of things throw at me this year, especially with the shortened season. At first it was hard because it was all coming at once and it didn't feel like we had a break. But now it's slowing down and it's good for me."

This season should be better for the 20-year-old guard. Burks will have the chance to go through an uninterrupted NBA offseason. That starts with the Orlando Summer League, a place where Burks plans to start his improvement.

"I want to improve on everything," Burks said. "I want to get a consistent 3-point shot. I want to get better on defense. I want to improve in all areas of my game and be a complete player. I think I can be a very good player in this league and I'm willing to do the work to get there."



(All, Jarrod Rudolph)

There are high expectations surrounding Burks. He played solid minutes during his rookie season and has the Jazz thinking he'll be ready to move into a more significant role. The team is looking to improve on its 36-30 record and is hopeful that Burks is a major contributor to that improvement.

"The expectations are high," he said. "I feel like I showed people I can play on this level in my rookie year. I want to keep proving myself and showing that I can play in this league. I want to make sure I'm able to help my team next season; I think we can be really good."

Burks is off to a good start this summer. After a poor shooting performance in the opening game of the Orlando Summer League, Burks rebounded for an impressive 31-point performance Tuesday. Burks followed up his game-high 31 points with a 15-point performance during the Jazz's 79-75 victory against the Orlando Magic on Wednesday. He's quickly emerged as the best player on the Jazz's Summer League team.

His coaches like what they're seeing from the talented guard.

"Alec has a ton of ability," said Jazz Summer League coach Jeff Hornacek. "He's very athletic, he can get to the basket and we've been happy with the way he's surveying everything and not forcing anything."

"He's doing a good job of picking his spots."

The early success won't slow Burks down. He has dreams of being an elite NBA player and standards that won't allow him to settle for anything less. His solid performances during the first three days of the Orlando Summer League are a step in the right direction, but a small part of the required walk towards his ultimate goals.

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