

The Salt Lake Tribune

Utah Jazz: Alec Burks leaves rookie season far behind

Jazz • Ex-guard exudes confidence, teammates say.

By Bill Oram

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Alec Burks doesn't even know where his pink backpack is.

It's a fitting metaphor for how far the Jazz guard has come in the 10 months since he debuted as a rookie when he was presented a pink backpack as part of a hazing ritual and went on to produce 7 points per game.

This year, Burks is serious, and his teammates treat him that way. A talented lottery pick, the former University of Colorado star is battling for minutes with a slew of guards, including Randy Foye and Gordon Hayward.

"He's one of the best guards at his position in his class for a reason," point guard Earl Watson said. "He's not afraid of any competition."

Coach Tyrone Corbin has given Burks opportunities at point guard early in the preseason, saying that both he and Foye may be thrust into that position depending on injuries or size mismatches.

"He's a guy that once he gets his minutes together and once he establishes a role," Watson said, "he could potentially be an All-Star."

It's big talk about a player who after offseason acquisitions at the wing positions seemed destined to slide



Francisco Kjolseth | The Salt Lake Tribune New Jazz recruit Alec Burks, a promising 19-year-old prospect is poised to help the Utah Jazz. June 25, 2011.

down the Jazz's bench.

However, Corbin said Burks will take on an increased role this year — somehow.

"I anticipate seeing him more on the floor on a consistent basis," the third-year coach said. "He's had a great summer, now [that needs to] transfer over to the games. I thought at the end of last year he came on very strong for us."

The Jazz drafted Burks as a supremely confident scorer out of Colorado, where he made nearly 50 percent of his shots and averaged 20 points after his sophomore year.

"He was a great player," said Andre Roberson, a junior Colorado guard who is considered an NBA prospect. "A dude that could score the ball with ease. In college he kind of lacked defense, but he made up for it on the offensive end."

Burks and Roberson remain close — Roberson was a freshman during Burks' sophomore and final season in Boulder — and worked out together before training camp.

Roberson said Burks was a better shooting, more physically imposing version of the same player he knew from their time together with the Buffaloes. And Burks was even more confident then before. Roberson said Burks' work ethic comes from his mother, Dina, who worked multiple jobs to provide for him and his brother.

"Just the way he grew up," Roberson said. "His mindset, he's not going to lose, he's not going to back down from nobody."

The confidence became Burks' hallmark, even as a rookie matching up against the league's elite.

"When you step between these lines, everybody's the same," Burks said. "No matter what your name is."

That way of thinking applies when measuring himself against his teammates as well. Burks spent the offseason honing his perimeter shooting — the Jazz are expected to be significantly better in that regard this year — but declined to specify what he needed to focus on moving forward because "if I pick one thing then my other things relax, so I'm just going to work on everything."

As for that confidence? He's got that locked up and is taking better care of it than he did his pink knapsack. It lives right here: "I know my talent will stick out," he said, "and I know I'll find my minutes somewhere."

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Alec Burks file

Position • Guard College • Colorado Age • 21

Career • Drafted No. 12 overall by Jazz in 2011 NBA Draft. ... Averaged 7.2 points in nearly 16 minutes per game during a lockout-shortened rookie season. ... Averaged 17.2 points per game and was named to the Summer League second team last summer in Orlando. ... Was named Big XII Freshman of the Year in 2009-10 and averaged 20.5 points as a sophomore.

Deseret News

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Utah Jazz: Alec Burks aims to keep proving himself in second season with Jazz

By Randy Hollis , Deseret News

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Utah Jazz guard Alec Burks has confidence after averaging more than 7 points per game as a rookie out of Colorado. (Kristin Murphy, Deseret News)

SALT LAKE CITY — Alec Burks still has a lot to learn about playing professional basketball.

Questions remain about his outside shooting ability, which is steadily improving but is still a work in progress. There are times when he likes to gamble — and occasionally loses badly — on defense.

At times, his shot selection is maddening. Though he's extremely quick and athletic, Burks has a bad habit of putting his head down and trying to force his way to the basket, often against opposing big men much larger and stronger than he is, when passing the ball off or pulling up for a short-range jumper would probably be a much better option — for him and for the team, too.

But there are two characteristics of his game that are absolutely invaluable: He's extremely confident in his own abilities, and he's completely fearless, regardless of who he's going up against.

Those are incredible qualities that you really can't coach or teach a young man, because they come from within.

And they are qualities which, last year as a 19-year-old NBA rookie for the Utah Jazz, allowed him to go up against the likes of the Lakers' Kobe Bryant and the league's other premier shooting guards without showing any signs of being the least bit wide-eyed, scared or intimidated.

"I wasn't excited about it at all," Burks said, downplaying those experiences as he prepared for Wednesday morning's practice session at Zion's Bank Basketball Center. "He's just the same as I am; everybody's the same, no matter what your name is.

"It's basketball. It's a game, not something you should be scared of. I relish it, I love the moment. That's why I've got so much confidence. You can't be (intimidated). You get caught up in that, you'll have a bad game. That's why I play the way I play, I've just got that much confidence in my game."

After averaging 7-plus points and 2.2 rebounds per game last season, Burks is back for his second go-round in the NBA. And he's eager to show that he not only belongs in the league but deserves more playing time on a team where the 6-foot-6 shooting guard must take a back seat to Gordon Hayward and Jazz newcomer Randy Foye.

"I know my time will come, I know I'll find my minutes somewhere," Burks said. "I feel like I can. I'll still play; it's all about competition, that's what they brought me here to do, to get better.

"I worked hard on that (jump shot). I wanted to prove people wrong, that's what I was trying to do. Just shoot, that's how you get better — repetition is the best teacher — just keep shooting, keep shooting all day."

Burks admitted that his rookie season was a bit of an eye-opener, but that he learned a great deal from it and has his sights set on improvement in Year 2.

"The life, the traveling, getting used to competing every day at a high level, I wasn't used to that part," he said. "I got wiser, got more stronger, and I used that experience and I got better.

"I want to improve on everything," Burks told reporters earlier this year at the Orlando Summer League. "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.

"The expectations are high. 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 ... I think we can be really good."

Burks scored five points in Utah's preseason opener on Monday night at Golden State, and Jazz head coach Tyrone Corbin said he intends to try and get the second-year player more time on the floor in the future. Burks played 17 minutes in Monday's 83-80 loss — roughly the same amount of court time that both Hayward and Foye saw as well.

"I anticipate seeing him more on the floor on a consistent basis," Corbin said. "He's had a great summer, and now we need to get his summer and training camp to transfer over to the games. I thought at the end of last year, he came on very strong for us, and he had a good summer league down in Orlando.

"He didn't get as many minutes as I wanted to get him in the first game (Monday), but he will play for us, and we're looking forward to him continuing to develop. ... Everybody has to raise their level of play to compete for minutes on the floor.

"He's coming along," Corbin said of Burks. "He's getting stronger, and he's understanding on the defensive end when to be aggressive and when to back off a little bit, and offensively how he has to have pace but controlled pace to his game."

Corbin pointed out Burks' propensity to take the ball hard to the hole when a different approach might be more beneficial.

"One of the things you saw in the game the other night, he came in and rushed a little bit," the Jazz coach said. "And when you go into the basket against big guys, you have to go in with body first and go vertical and not horizontal because these guys are so big.

"He's going to continue to get experience in this league, and minutes on the floor will help that and just playing. And that's going to come with time and getting used to playing at this level."

Indeed, the learning curve continues for the former University of Colorado star and Missouri prep player of the year, with plenty of on-the-job training to come.

But Burks' playing time won't ever be hindered by his lack of confidence or fearlessness.

No, he already possesses those critical characteristics in great abundance.

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By Brian Metzler

Published 23 hours ago

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Renee Metivier Baillie was picked up by Mizuno shortly

before the Chicago Marathon.

Renee Metivier Baillie has had plenty of success running on the track, roads and cross country courses since she concluded her All-American career at the University of Colorado eight years ago, but the 30-year-old Bend, Ore., resident only committed to running her first marathon about nine weeks ago. After failing to make the final of the 5,000 meters on the track at the U.S. Olympic Trials in June, she switched gears to longer training, won the U.S. 20K championships in New Haven, Conn., on Sept. 3 and then finished eighth at last weekend's Chicago Marathon. Just 16 months removed from surgery to repair her right Achilles, Metivier Baillie was the top American and ran a 2:27:17—the fifth-fastest debut in U.S. history.

A year and a half ago, you were on the verge of possibly quitting the sport. Now you're a 2:27 marathoner. How did you get there?

I actually thought about retiring. Not quitting running, because I'll always run, but I was thinking about letting go professionally. I thought it might be time to move on because I had so many setbacks. Even though you still believe in yourself, you start to think maybe it's time because my body can't handle it anymore. My Achilles has been a thorn in my side for seven years, and it's hard to keep putting yourself through that. Even though I didn't doubt that I had more in there, I thought maybe that wasn't the path I should be taking. Austin [Baillie, her husband] never stopped believing in me, and I went to have that surgery in Sweden as my last option. [The procedure included the removal of a bursa sack, scraping of her Achilles tendon and removing a bone spur.] It worked and I came back healthy, but it was a lot longer comeback time than I anticipated. My right leg is still weak and I was forcing too much speed and track work, so it's actually good that I switched to marathon training in that way. I didn't anticipate running a marathon this fall. My agent has been trying to get me to do one because he thought I would do well, but I've kept saying, "No, no, no. I'm a 5K runner. I'm a track runner." I've always loved cross country and I also love the roads. I was planning on doing my debut marathon next spring so I could more properly plan it out and be prepared, but my body was just transitioning well on its own as I started doing longer training runs. As I took a break from the speed on the track, I was doing so much better and getting stronger. I tested my fitness at a few road races and my foot and Achilles were fine, and I felt great.

You were on 2:25:50 pace for most of the race, but it sounds like some problems with rehydrating on the course caught up with you. What happened?

They put our bottles on tables ahead of time in an assigned space. I drank from my bottle at 5K, but after that I really didn't drink too much because I could never find my bottle as I was running up to the tables. They all looked alike. I only got a few sips from a few Gatorade cups they have on the other tables for everyone else. I know I got one at 8 miles, but even when you pinch the top, half of it spills out of the cup



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when you grab it. So from 5K on, I barely had any fuel. I tried to take a gel at mile 20—even though that was kind of late—but it wasn't a kind I had ever used before and I had trouble opening it. I should have held on to it for a while, but I threw it to the side because I was frustrated that I couldn't get it open. My calves cramped like crazy with 5K to go and my stride got a little choppy. I tried to stay calm, because I was still doing well and was still holding under 6-minute pace.

I can't be too disappointed because I still ran pretty well. I learned a valuable lesson, though. I'm going to have neon lights on my bottles in the future. I'll bring my own bottles, too. The ones they give you all look the same. I'm going to have taller bottles that are bright pink or something like that. A lot of the guys had decorated bottles, but most of the women's bottles looked all the same.

What's it like being coached by your husband? [Austin Baillie, who also ran at the University of Colorado, has run a 1:04:18 half marathon and a 2:19:35 marathon.]

He has been an integral part of everything I've done to get to where I am now. He paces me on every run and workout. He hasn't coached a lot of runners, but he studies the sport methodically. He knows a lot, has talked to a lot of coaches and takes a lot of notes and knows how my body works very well. Most of all, he developed and plan and helped me stick to it. On my 22-mile training run, I said "I feel pretty good, maybe we should go for 23," and he said, "No" and made me stop. He can tell from my breathing with how I'm doing. He's been a fantastic coach. I can't say enough about that. He had a plan and it was perfect.

So what did you learn as a first-time marathoner?

For sure, you have to make sure you go in feeling good and smartly trained. But the biggest thing is to be prepared for the unexpected and don't panic when something happens that you didn't expect. Things are going to go wrong—either with the weather or with your hydration plan or something else. Just have patience and stick to your plan as best possible. I came through in 1:13 at the half, but then I picked it up for the next 8 miles. Maybe it would have helped to hold off, stay on pace and try to pick it up later. It's really easy to get going quicker than you need to, especially for a track runner. You have to know what the pace feels like and stick to it.

Are you a marathoner now?

Chicago very encouraging. I never thought I'd be a marathoner. But now I've totally caught the marathon bug and I understand why people want to do them all the time. Not just on a professional level, just as a runner. It's addicting. A few weeks into my training, I had never enjoyed running more. I actually really enjoyed going on my 22-mile runs. If you'd asked me if I would be enjoying that two months before, I would have said, "No way, but I'll do it if I have to." It's kind of exciting because it's brought me a whole new chapter in my life and my career. I still want to run track and cross country, and I hope I can make the U.S. team for the World Cross Country Championships in 2013, but I hope to run another marathon in the spring, too.

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