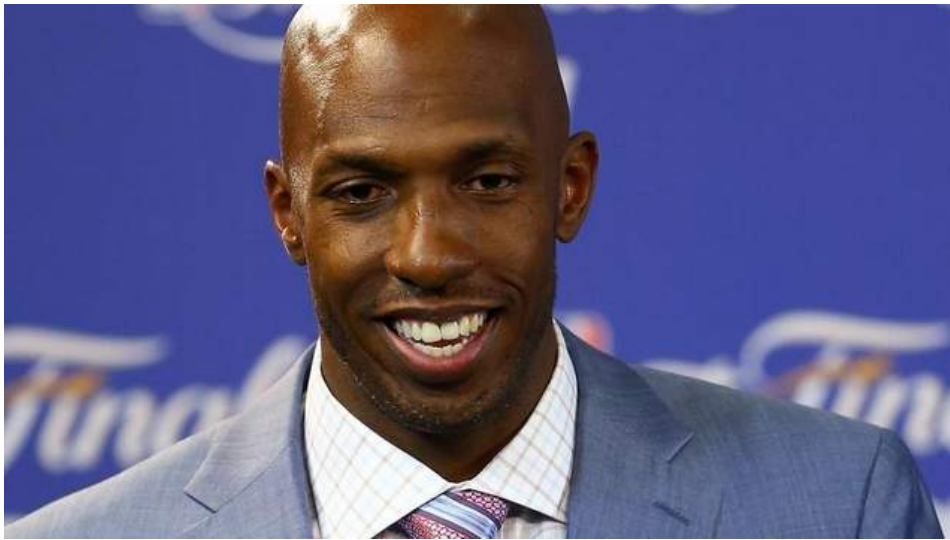


All's forgiven: Chauncey Billups returns to Pistons with 2-year, \$5M deal

Thu, Jul 11

detroitnews.com



San Antonio Spurs v Miami Heat - Game Two

Chauncey Billups has appeared in 1,024 regular-season NBA games, and has career averages of 15.4 points and 5.5 assists. He won the NBA championship with Detroit in 2004. (Streeter Lecka / Getty Images)

Orlando, Fla. — Pistons owner Tom Gores spotted a face he'd seen in the Palace, only Gores was in the bowels of the

Staples Center in Los Angeles.

"So I heard you played a little basketball for us," the Beverly Hills resident said.

Chauncey Billups, wearing his usual wide smile, nodded and shook Gores' hand before turning his attention to Pistons President Joe Dumars after the L.A. Clippers beat up on the Pistons this past March.

The two engaged in a conversation, asking about one another's families and trading

old jokes, an exchange that belied the mutual respect the two men shared.

Although their relationship had been strained ever since Dumars traded Billups in the 2008-09 season, the door had been re-opened for a reconciliation, and Billups walked through it Thursday morning, signing with the franchise that made him a household name and a champion.

The two year contract is worth \$5 million, with a team option for a second season, according to sources.

"Chauncey's the best," said Pistons guard Rodney Stuckey, who came to Orlando to visit with the team. "Ask anybody around this league, nothing but great things to say about him. We're excited as an organization but the fans as well. He's done a lot of great things for the city of Detroit."

Billups, the 2004 NBA Finals MVP who earned the moniker "Mr. Big Shot" for his late-game heroics and calm demeanor, will hear John Mason's booming voice once again in the Palace.

Billups, 36, has battled injuries the past couple of years, including a debilitating Achilles' injury he suffered in the 2011-12 season that took a season to recover from.

He played 15 games in 2011-12, averaging 15 points and four assists as a shooting guard alongside Chris Paul with the Clippers and, after recovering from the injury last season, averaged 8.4 points and 2.0 assists.

Billups will become a mentor in the locker room for some of his younger teammates, most notably point guard Brandon Knight, whose early struggles most resembled Billups' before he found his footing in Detroit.

"I mean, in this league there's no substitute for experience. This is a Finals MVP coming back," said Greg Monroe, also with the team.

"Who wouldn't want that? That's years of experience."

League executives believe Billups, if healthy, can compete for real minutes at the point guard spot — and he's probably the best facilitating point guard on the roster.

"He's played basketball at the highest level and he shares

 information," Monroe said. "At this stage, that's his highest thing, not that he can't play anymore but he's an ambassador of the game. I think he's gonna help the young guys advance a bit quicker because of his knowledge and his maturity."

Billups came to Detroit as a free agent after the 2001-02 season and in his six seasons as a Piston, always advanced to the conference finals before being traded to his hometown Denver for Allen Iverson, a move that signaled the end of the elite days for the Pistons.

Billups, who wanted to follow in Pistons President Joe Dumars' steps as a front office executive, was deeply hurt by the deal but the two have since repaired their relationship in the past year.

"Me and Joe at one time were really tight," Billups told the Detroit News in December. "The trade

 , the way it was handled, led to the strain in the relationship.

"It's cool now, though. We've talked about it now."

Dumars has long admitted the mistake privately, in part because of how everything crumbled with the franchise since, in part because Stuckey wasn't ready — or willing to assume the heavy responsibility of being "The Guy."

"He and I did have a long, long conversation," Dumars said of Billups. "It was good to have. From that point on, that's when we've gotten back to checking on each other and seeing how we were."

After acquiring talented and emotional forward Josh Smith, along with having a player in Knight who's still learning the nuances of the point guard spot, Billups was viewed as the perfect mentor for a young team looking to make a significant jump back to the playoffs.

And apparently, by signing with the Pistons, Billups is implying he sees things the same way.


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Thursday, July 11, 2013

Pistons add Chauncey Billups

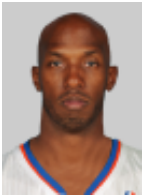
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DETROIT -- [Chauncey Billups](#) wanted to stay with the [Detroit Pistons](#) for the rest of his career.

Now, the team that traded him away wants him back.

Pistons president of basketball operations [Joe Dumars](#) confirmed Thursday morning that Billups and the team have agreed to terms on a contract.

The Return Of 'Big Shot'



Although Chauncey Billups didn't score as much as Dave Bing or assist as much as Isiah Thomas, the 2004 Finals MVP has the highest Player Efficiency Rating among all guards in Pistons franchise history.

Pistons' All-Time PER guard leaders (450 Games)

Player	PER	PPG	APG	G
Chauncey Billups	21.0	17.0	6.4	463
Dave Bing*	18.3	22.6	6.4	675
Isiah Thomas*	18.1	19.2	9.3	979
Richard Hamilton	17.2	18.4	3.8	631
Joe Dumars*	15.3	16.1	4.5	1,018

*Hall of Famer

Source: *Basketball-Reference.com*

Billups is getting a two-year deal, the first season guaranteed, for \$2.5 million each year.

"I never wanted to leave here. Everyone knows that," he said on Jan. 26, 2011, after making a flurry of 3-pointers late in a game to help Denver win in Detroit. "I wanted to retire here."

He's back to help the Pistons as a pass-first point guard, who can make 3-point shots. And, he will be expected to mentor 21-year-old [Brandon Knight](#) and [Kentavious Caldwell-Pope](#), the No. 8 overall pick in the draft, in the backcourt and off the court.

Detroit dealt Billups to Denver on Nov. 3, 2008, when the franchise decided its championship-winning window had closed. The Pistons are almost 100 games under .500 since making the unpopular and unsuccessful move. The Pistons traded Billups in part to speed the development of [Rodney Stuckey](#), to see if [Allen Iverson](#) could provide a spark while his contract expired and to clear salary-cap space for the future.

"It was just a season of inevitable change and inevitable pain," Dumars said after the 2008-09 season ended by getting swept in the first round by the [LeBron James](#)-led [Cleveland Cavaliers](#). "Although it was a tough year, we also knew it was a necessary process if you're trying to position yourself to remain relevant."

Stuckey, who is still with the team, never became a dependable point guard. The millions spent in the summer of 2009 on free agents [Ben Gordon](#) and [Charlie Villanueva](#) turned out to be wasted. The Pistons traded Gordon last summer, basically to get his contract off the books, to Charlotte for a first-round pick. Detroit could still deal Villanueva, who is entering the last year of his deal, to a team that might want to take on his expiring contract later this summer or during the upcoming season.

The Pistons, 148-244 since trading Billups, are in a four-year postseason drought that is their longest since missing six straight from 1978 through 1983.

Billups, a five-time All-Star, turns 37 in September.

He tore his left Achilles tendon during the 2011-12 season, when he was limited to 20 game with the [Los Angeles Clippers](#), and bounced back last season to play 22 games for them.

Last month in an interview with "ESPN First Take," Billups said, "I feel like I'm back healthy again."

Billups has averaged 15.4 points -- making 42 percent of his 3-pointers -- and 5.5 assists during his career.

Boston drafted him out of Colorado with the No. 3 pick in the 1997 draft. He went on to be on rosters in Toronto, with his hometown Nuggets, Orlando, Minnesota, Detroit, back to Denver, New York and the Clippers.

He bounced around early in his career and has lately, but has always had fans at The Palace, which hasn't been the same buzz-filled building it once was since he was sent away. When Billups played his first game there after the trade on March 3, 2009, his signature introduction -- "Buh! Buh! Buh! Billups! -- set off a standing ovation that lasted a couple of minutes and led to him blowing kisses in each direction.

Back then, Billups said it was the most emotional regular-season game he's experienced in his 12-year career.

"I may forget the game and what happened," he said. "But the ovation and warm welcome the fans gave me, I'll never forget."

It's easy to forget how good the Pistons were after they signed him as a free agent in 2002.

With his steady play on the court and calm demeanor off it, Billups helped the Pistons win a title and come within a victory of repeating while reaching at least the Eastern Conference finals in each of his six full seasons with them. The Magic Johnson-led [Los Angeles Lakers](#) are the only other franchise to play in six straight conference finals since 1970-71, when teams had to win two series to advance that far.

The Pistons, though, seemed to be fading as a championship contender when it won just two games in three straight conference finals before sending Billups away. As the Pistons try to make a climb back toward being a relevant NBA team, a goal that was helped by signing [Josh Smith](#) on Wednesday, they want Billups to return.

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

The Washington Post

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Cowboys release FB Lawrence Vickers following recent emphasis on TE

By Associated Press, Published: July 12

IRVING, Texas — The Dallas Cowboys have released fullback Lawrence Vickers, not a surprising move considering their recent emphasis on an offense with two tight ends.

The move announced Friday came after Vickers had back surgery following the season and worked only on the side during offseason practices.

Dallas is unlikely to carry a fullback on the roster after loading up on tight ends behind Jason Witten. The Cowboys drafted Gavin Escobar in the second round and signed veteran Dante Rosario. Second-year player James Hanna is also in the mix.

The 30-year-old Vickers played in all 16 games in his only season in Dallas, finishing with three carries for 11 yards and 13 catches for 104 yards. He had two tackles on special teams.

He also played for Cleveland and Houston.

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Friday, July 12, 2013

Cowboys waive Lawrence Vickers

By Tim MacMahon
ESPNDallas.com

The [Dallas Cowboys](#) waived fullback [Lawrence Vickers](#) on Friday.

Waiving Vickers saves the Cowboys \$1.2 million against the salary cap. The Cowboys now have approximately \$10 million in cap space.

Vickers, who underwent back surgery in April, became expendable because the Cowboys plan to operate out of two-tight end sets as their base offense. Dallas, which drafted tight end [Gavin Escobar](#) in the second round to complement Pro Bowler [Jason Witten](#), will not have a fullback on its roster.

More on the Cowboys



Calvin Watkins, Tim MacMahon and Todd Archer have the Dallas Cowboys blanketed.

[Blog »](#) [ESPN Dallas »](#)

[Top 50 Cowboys](#)

The 30-year-old Vickers played one season in Dallas, catching 13 passes for 104 yards while primarily serving as a lead blocker for an offense that ranked 31st in the league in rushing.

Vickers played his first five NFL seasons for the [Cleveland Browns](#) and spent 2011 with the [Houston Texans](#), helping [Arian Foster](#) rush for 1,224 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Rodney Stuckey, Greg Monroe excited to have Chauncey Billups return to Detroit Pistons

By Vince Ellis Detroit Free Press Sports Writer Filed Under Sports Detroit Pistons Rodney Stuckey
Chauncey Billups Brandon Knight
Jul. 14

freep.com

Mr. Big Shot is returning to the Palace.

Chauncey Billups, 36, will join a backcourt that includes a nucleus of Brandon Knight, Rodney Stuckey, rookie Kentavious Caldwell-Pope and Will Bynum. With his 16 years of experience, it's safe to assume he will be called upon to mentor Knight and Caldwell-Pope.

Stuckey was just beginning his second season with the Pistons when Billups was traded in November 2008.

"Chauncey's the best," said Stuckey, who was in Orlando

to meet with new coach Maurice Cheeks and watch the Pistons' summer-league team. "You can ask anybody around this league, they only have great things to say about him. I think we're all excited as an organization, but also the fans, too, as well.

"He's done great things for the city of Detroit, and you're just happy to have a guy like that back."

Two people with knowledge of the situation say the agreement is worth \$5 million, and the team carries an option for the second season.

A return to the Pistons appeared unlikely after the hero of the 2004 NBA Finals victory over the Lakers was traded to the Nuggets for Allen Iverson.

Billups has admitted that the trade

bothered him, but he said last December — while a member of the Clippers — that he had mended fences with Pistons president of basketball operations Joe Dumars, and he told the Free Press: "I will just say this first and foremost: No matter what happens, I'm a lifetime Piston. I always feel like I'm a lifetime Piston.

"As you know, I would have loved to retire

a Piston when I was here, but that really wasn't in the cards. You never say never to any situation. I got nothing but great memories about here and winning, and this building was on fire. I would like for my memories to stay like that."

And the memories are great. Signed as a free agent by the Pistons in the summer of 2002, he was joined by Rip Hamilton when Dumars traded Jerry Stackhouse to the Wizards.

Billups, who was on his fifth team in his young career, and Hamilton went on to form one of the NBA's best backcourts. The Pistons ran off six straight appearances in the Eastern Conference finals. The highlight was the NBA title in 2004, when Billups was named Finals MVP.

But by the time the Pistons dropped the 2008 Eastern Conference finals to the Celtics, a sense of stagnation crept into the organization and, two games into the next season, Dumars traded Billups for Iverson's expiring deal.

The Pistons haven't had a winning season since.

Billups is 16 months removed from suffering a torn left Achilles tendon and is coming off an injury-marred season for the Clippers, averaging 8.4 points and 2.2 assists in 22 games.

The move makes for a jammed backcourt, with four players capable of playing the point guard position—a tricky situation Cheeks will have to solve.

On Thursday, the Pistons released shooting guard Kim English, a second-round draft choice last season. They had until today to decide on his status. The Pistons have 16 players under their control, and the roster limit is 15.

The signing of free agent Josh Smith, the hiring of Rasheed Wallace as an assistant and bringing back Billups has created some good karma among the fan base.

"He's an ambassador of the game," said teammate Greg Monroe. "I think he'll help the younger guys on the team advance a little bit quicker because of his knowledge, his maturity and his leadership."

Contact Vince Ellis: 313-222-6479 or vellis@freepress.com. Follow him on Twitter @vincent_ellis56. The Associated Press contributed.

PistonPowered: Chauncey Billups can contribute more than just 'mentoring' to Detroit Pistons

By Patrick Hayes Detroit Free Press Sports Writer Filed Under Sports Detroit Pistons Chauncey Billups Ben Wallace Brandon Knight
Jul. 14

freep.com

Patrick Hayes is a senior writer for the Detroit Pistons blog PistonPowered . His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Detroit Free Press nor its writers. PistonPowered writers contribute a column every Friday at freep.com/pistons . Contact Patrick at patrickhayes13@gmail.com or on Twitter [@patrick_hayes](https://twitter.com/patrick_hayes) .

Coming off an injury-plagued season in 2009, Ben Wallace accepted a one-year contract with the Detroit Pistons that seemed like a farewell tour. In his final season in Cleveland, in addition to being hurt, Wallace's numbers were down and, after he was traded to Phoenix by the Cavaliers for Shaquille O'Neal, Wallace reportedly considered retiring

 before a buyout by the Suns allowed him to return to the Pistons.

For Detroit, Wallace seemed like insurance — the team was retooling and needed to add some depth to its patched-together frontcourt. Wallace, at his advanced age, surely couldn't handle a major role and certainly couldn't come close to the productivity of his best years in the league.

Except he did. The 'Benaissance' season, as it became known in the Pistons blogosphere, was one of franchise's few bright spots over the last four years. In nearly 30 minutes per game in 2009-10, Wallace averaged 8.7 rebounds, 1.2 blocks and 1.2 steals per game. His 54% shooting was the second-best mark of his career and, though he wasn't the rim-protecting presence he once was, his post defense was as stellar as ever. Wallace was the best big man on the Pistons' roster that season (not that there was much competition).

Can Chauncey Billups, also well past his prime, also coming off of a season full of injuries, have a similar revival? There certainly are credible factors that suggest he won't approach the type of production and impact Wallace had in his return. Billups (37) is a little bit older than Wallace (34) was. Billups' worst injury, a ruptured Achilles tendon, is more debilitating than the broken leg that befell Wallace. The Pistons also have a more complicated point guard situation. They have a young player they're trying to develop in Brandon Knight, and they have a competent backup in Will Bynum, whom they just re-signed. When Wallace returned, the frontcourt rotation consisted of Charlie Villanueva, Kwame Brown, Chris Wilcox and Jason Maxiell. The only player the Pistons had any sort of long-term commitment to was Villanueva. The others were journeymen who, at their peaks, were nowhere near the caliber player Wallace was, so it wasn't a total shock that he worked his way past them in the rotation. It would be quite a shock if Billups significantly cut into Knight's or Bynum's minutes. And yet ...

The key for Wallace earning

 minutes on that team was the fact that his greatest remaining skills — rebounding, interior defense, basketball IQ and his underrated passing ability — were among the team's greatest deficiencies. Billups' remaining skills — a low turnover rate, an ability to run a competent

halfcourt offense and an ability to shoot from the perimeter — are areas in which the current version of the Pistons struggles.

Billups hit 37% of his threee-pointers last season. With apologies to Andre Drummond and his 50% three-point marksmanship, that mark was better than any player returning to the Pistons this season. Billups' turnover percentage last season was 14.6%, significantly better than Knight and Bynum (both 17%). And playing exclusively as an off-guard next to Chris Paul last season, Billups still managed a 17.4% assist percentage. Knight's was just 21%, playing half the season primarily at point guard. In Billups' last season as a full-time point guard in 2010-11, his assist percentage was nearly 26%.

Billups' three-point shooting alone will assure him of a regular role — the team is devoid of shooters, and with a lineup featuring Drummond, Josh Smith and Greg Monroe playing big minutes, floor spacing will be critical. I don't discount the leadership/mentoring role Billups can play for Knight, but more important, Billups' ability to run an offense and take care of the ball also will, hopefully, challenge Knight for minutes. Knight has shown moments of promise during his first two seasons in the NBA, but other than Jose Calderon briefly, the Pistons have had no one at the point guard position who could legitimately push Knight for the starting job.

Knight winning that job outright and keeping it through consistent play is the best possible outcome for both him and the organization, which desperately needs him to develop. Billups can provide a valuable role simply by providing an example of how to play the point guard position at a high level. But more important, he also gives the Pistons an on-court steadying option if Knight's inconsistency and turnovers continue to be an issue.

Billups might not have as much left as Wallace did when he returned, but with his competitiveness, along with the chance to work with strength-and-conditioning coach Arnie Kander again, don't count on his days of being a productive point guard being over, either.

Deseret News

Utah Jazz: Defense, starting are near-term goals for Alec Burks

By Jody Genessy, Deseret News

Published: Thursday, July 11 2013 7:33 p.m. MDT



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (0) drives between Utah Jazz guard Alec Burks (10) and forward Derrick Favors (15) in the first quarter of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City, Wednesday, March 13, 2013. (Sue Ogrocki, AP)

ORLANDO, Fla. — Earlier this week, Utah Jazz shooting guard Alec Burks had something to say to assistant coach Sidney Lowe after a game at the Orlando Pro Summer League.

"Coach, did you see that defense?"

Lowe had seen it.

"That's exciting for us," Lowe said.

It wasn't just exciting to see that the third-

year pro played defense.

It was also exciting for the Jazz coaching staff that Burks listened to its advice and then returned with a positive self-report.

That's progress in action.

"We know that he can score the basketball. He can get to the basket," Lowe said. "But I saw him trying to really defend a little better here this summer, really trying to get after people better."

Burks has shown an improvement in the angles he takes on opposing shooting guards, Lowe said. He's pressuring the ball better. He's being more aggressive.

"He's certainly got to get better," Lowe said, "but he's working at it."

Burks didn't play in the Jazz's 79-73 loss to Indiana on Thursday — it was known coming in he'd get

some time off — but fine-tuning his defensive game was a summer goal for the 6-foot-6 athletic guard.

In a sense, doing that brings him another step closer to earning his way into the Jazz's regular rotation.

That's one of the reasons Burks was glad to participate in the summer league even while a majority of players involved are rookies or NBA roster hopefuls.

It's also why he was excited to remind his coach that he'd followed orders.

"Anytime I do something good," he said, "I'm going to let you know about it."



Utah's Alec Burks attempts to block a shot by Denver's Evan Fournier as the Utah Jazz and the Denver Nuggets play Wednesday, April 3, 2013 in Salt Lake City at Energy Solutions arena. (Scott G Winterton, Deseret News)

Burks has done more good, more consistently, than any other Jazz player at summer league. He had a rough shooting outing against Houston (5 for 15), but he's averaged 14 points while playing an average of just 19 minutes a game.

While younger players have struggled finding their comfort zone — including highly touted point guard Trey Burke — Burks has simply looked like an NBA player among wannabes.

"I feel like I'm a vet," said Burks, who has two seasons of NBA experience. "It should show different. I should play different than everybody else. That's why I feel like I have."

Another thing Burks is feeling?

That he should take Denver-bound Randy Foye's old job.

"That's what I come into the NBA every year to do — start," Burks said. "So I'm not going to set my goals any lower. I want to start."

Burks will certainly get that opportunity. For now, the only other candidates are newcomer Brandon Rush, who's rehabbing from ACL surgery, and perhaps Gordon Hayward if Jazz coach Tyrone Corbin decides to go with a different veteran small forward like Richard Jefferson or Marvin Williams (after his return from Achilles tendon surgery).

Two years after leaving Colorado following his sophomore season, Burks believes now is the time for his pro career to really blossom. He's eager for the challenge and opportunity of a steady role in the rotation.

Three months after his exit meeting with Jazz brass following the end of the 2012-13 season, Burks continues to take to heart the message given to him: "Just come back a better player and a better man at the same time."

Since then, Burks has bounced around from his hometown of Kansas City, Mo., Utah and the P3 training facility in Santa Barbara, Calif., trying to work toward that offseason goal.

Burks, the 12th pick of the 2011 draft, believes he's taken strides since his second NBA season ended.

"I felt like I grew up. I'm about to turn 22 (on July 20). As a man, I feel I'm growing up," he said. "As a basketball player my game's getting complete. My jumper's getting better. I'm getting stronger. I'm just learning the game better."

Lowe smiled when told about Burks talking about his maturity.

"I told him, 'Your generation, you guys are really cool,'" Lowe recalled from a previous conversation. "I said, 'It's not cool to be cool.' I said, 'You're a professional.'"

More and more, Burks is acting that part.

Offensively, Burks credits his improved jumper to time spent with former Jazz assistant coach Jeff Hornacek — now the Phoenix Suns' bench boss — and player development coach Johnnie Bryant. They corrected his mechanics and got him to put more arch on his shot.

"Both of those together have helped me out a lot," Burks said. "I feel like from my first year I've made a lot of improvement."

Burke noticed something right away about Burks, which could be needed in what might be a roller-coaster season for the Jazz in 2013-14.

"He's a very positive type of person. I like that a lot," Burke said. "That was the first thing I noticed about him."

Burke also loves his new backcourt mate's offensive game.

"He's a pure shooter. He's a guy that can knock down shots, knock down contested shots," Burke said of Burks. "One of his strengths, he gets to the rim better than a lot of people that I've (seen). ... It's always good having another guard in the backcourt like Alec, who can make plays."

Especially when he does it on both ends, as Burks might remind you.

Corbin likes that Burks got some experience last year at point guard, which will come in handy when the Jazz try to match up against bigger playmakers.

The Jazz coach doesn't disagree with Burks' view that he's ready to get a shot at starting. Corbin said he expects "an expanded role" for both Burks and fourth-year forward Jeremy Evans.

"That opportunity's there," Corbin added of Burks. "It's still early in the process. He had a good year for us last year."

Of course, there were 18 games in which Burks didn't even get his name called for a minute. And he only averaged 17.8 minutes in the other 64 games.

Burks, who's scored 7.1 points per game on 42.4 percent shooting in two seasons, wants more than that.

That's why he's also excited about the roster changes that have cleared the way for the next generation of Jazz players, including Hayward, Derrick Favors and Enes Kanter.

"That's what we all work for. We all dream of it to get the time to show our talent," Burks said. "The sky's the limit. We're all talented. It's going to be fun to watch."

Knowing him, Burks will let you know how he does.

EMAIL: jody@desnews.com

TWITTER: [DJJazzyJody](https://twitter.com/DJJazzyJody)
