

Written by

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My questions in bold, Kirk's answers not in bold. If you couldn't figure that out, then there's something wrong with you. Check out [MMB](#) for my responses to his questions. Thanks to Kirk for taking the time to respond.

Oh, and I'm not as nice (or desperate) as the Suns so there will be no refunds for this Q&A. Enjoy it, because you won't get your money back.

**The [Mavericks](#) have had seemingly five or six guys miss games with injury already. Who is actually healthy right now, and who is going to start?**

I'll have to remember that "who is healthy?" is not the same as "who is good at basketball" because the latter question has a short answer list. Right now, everyone is healthy, assuming you consider [Derek Fisher's](#) rigor mortis to be healthy, other than Dirk who is not slated to come back to game action for a few more weeks. If it feels like everyone has been injured for Dallas, it's much more that the team's been beaten so badly on a number of occasions that the rotation is all over the place.

**What has happened to [Darren Collison](#), and has he really been bad enough to warrant signing Derrick Fisher?**

Let me present you with a stat that was accurate up until the Detroit game Saturday. Darren Collison was 14-of-40 from the floor with 12 assists and 10 turnovers in fourth quarters and overtime this season. He's been given the midrange shot, and anywhere from 10 to 15 feet away he's shooting 26%. Dallas is -25 per [48 minutes](#) with him on the floor. I could keep going with the horrible stats. This is our lead guy, the one who orchestrates the offense. It's pretty painful to watch at times.

Of course, when he's good, he's pretty special. He's just not been good very often.

**[O.J. Mayo](#) has gotten off to an unbelievable start. How much of that is his ridiculous 3-point shooting (52.7 percent) and how much of it is Mayo just excelling in his new role? Do you expect it to continue all year?**

Giving him the green light to make plays and shoot the basketball without fear of getting pulled has done wonders for Mayo's confidence. The skill has been there, but it's so clear he hasn't been coached ever. With his three point shot he's taking what's there, and it's crazy that these shots are still available to him after nearly 20 games. The first part of the season he was roasting teams alive at a 60% clip from beyond the arc. However, the three point shooting is a bit of stat padding to a degree; he's shooting 37% on all mid-range twos. He's actually done MUCH better from anywhere inside the arc these last 10 games as for a while the only thing

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that was falling was the long ball.

I love him as a player right now, but it's so hard to tell what his ceiling is. At 25 he should be better than he is but, again, it's obvious in some areas he's lacked firm coaching. He doesn't come off screens well consistently. He really struggles as the primary ball handler in the pick and roll. He's prone to making passes a JV team could see coming. His defense is atrocious. But, he's trying and he's getting better. He didn't just show up and play well. He's worked at it and since he's the focal point right now, I am so so pleased with the results.

**3) Is Vince Carter actually trying for Dallas? Or would you like to borrow a flamethrower?**

We talked about this in the pre-season... I hated Vince last year because there was either GREAT Vince or "Dear God Make It Stop" Vince. No in between. My colleagues tell me I'm exaggerating, but I don't think I am. This year... he's... oh my God I can't believe I'm going to say this... he's been excellent. He's been the Mavs second best player. I'm sure you saw the [Zach Lowe Grantland](#) piece on him. If not, read it now.

He's been tasked to do the following: shoot open threes, post up smaller defenders and either score or pass out of the double team, and run the occasional pick and roll. He's also been asked to carry the offense as it's been terrible for stretches of games and while that part doesn't work out, the first three things he's been amazing. He's hitting threes (most of them wide open due to ball movement) at a steady clip, rebound hard, playing freaking defense. It's incredible. Can he keep it up? I think so. I really do. Ideally, he plays 20 minutes, shoots 4-8 times, and gives the starters some time to breathe. It's so strange to say all this. It's like being in a recovery program.

**4) The Mavericks are sitting at 8-9 and are in 10th place in the West, but they are still without Dirk Nowitzki. What is the timetable on Nowitzki, and do you think his return will get them back into the playoff picture?**

He *should* be back in game action around the 20th of this month. The problem then is the schedule: Miami, Memphis, San Antonio, OKC, Denver, San Antonio again, Washington, and Miami again. All those games in 12 days. Our fans don't like hearing this, but Dallas has played a cupcake schedule so far. That we're 8-9 is silly because there have been 3 games the guys simply couldn't close. I do not feel good about the team right now at all. But Dirk is Dirk and makes everyone better. He helps with their current turnover issues but not with rebounding and defense, particularly in the pick and roll. I'm really concerned. I see no value in being an 8 seed.

So yes, I think they get back in the picture. But I don't see them being able to do much.

**5) Have any players (other than Mayo) really surprised you with the way they've played so far?**

Beyond Vince Carter, yes, many of them have. First, Darren Collison has been fairly bad. I watched him play a lot in college and was happy to see his early success in New Orleans, but he seems to have bizarre confidence issues. When he's good, the Dallas offense runs like a well oiled machine. When he's bad, he's really bad, and the team is often terrible. His jump shot has been terrible to date, he has a hard time finishing in the lane, and he's turnover prone.

## Q & A with Kirk Henderson of Mavs Moneyball

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On top of that he seems to grate under hard coaching, which is odd given his UCLA background. Also, his defense is terrible. He runs into screens like he's never seen one before. Be on the look out for his incredulous face when he smacks into someone tonight.

Brand has also been shockingly bad, though he seems to have finally turned a corner. His mid range shot similar fell off the planet. It was excellent last year (45% from 15 foot area) and this year its been horrid (around 30%). But he got going against both Philly and the [Pistons](#) so hopefully we'll see more of him playing well.

Our second round rookies have also been a delight. [Jae Crowder](#) is the darling of the stats community and he's been fun, if up and down.

[Bernard James](#)

is the real surprise His per minute rebounding is fantastic His shot blocking is incredible. James has also shown much better touch than I would've imagined around the rim. It's nice to be rooting for younger players again. Dallas has been an old folks home for years.