

New Suns coach Lindsey Hunter's staff up in the air

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It appears that the upheaval on the coaching staff won't end with Alvin Gentry being replaced with [Lindsey Hunter](#) .

Two other assistant coaches, [Elston Turner](#) and [Dan Majerle](#) , were given the bad news on their candidacy to take over the reins just before practice started and were excused from the proceedings.

"Lindsey offered everyone the chance to stay," Lance Blanks said a couple of times when asked about Turner and Majerle. "[Hunter] will be meeting with the staff this afternoon and figuring things out."

Blanks recused himself from speaking on assistant coaches, leaving that to Hunter.

"I assume that whoever we hire as the interim would make the selections on who would be on his staff," Lon Babby said the other day. Babby did not speak today, referring reporters to Blanks and Hunter.

Elston Turner, who was brought in a year ago to lead the defensive effort (23rd in efficiency last season, 26th this year), was seen walking around the facility and meeting with staffers while Hunter's first practice was ongoing. Majerle left the building immediately after getting the news. While it's possible those guys will come around and stay on the staff, it's also likely that's the last we've seen of them this season.

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Joining Hunter on the court for practice were [Igor Kokoskov](#) (also denied the head coaching job this morning) and Noel Gillespie. Press room gossip has Corey Gaines joining the staff full time if Majerle and/or Turner leave.

"We plan to have a veteran on the bench or in the second row to help out," Blanks said, hinting that things may not have gone well with the veteran assistants without naming them specifically.

As far as player-development coaches go, it was reported earlier this morning that Sean Rooks got a coaching job overseas and will leave the team immediately. That leaves only Ralph Sampson left from Hunter's PD staff to work with players outside of practice.

The other day, Lon Babby mentioned Sampson specifically to help continue making [Marcin Gortat](#) a better player so maybe he will join the coaching staff as well? Who knows.

The new staff may just be full of guys with little coaching experience outside Igor Kokoskov.

"He was the right guy to give us a jolt," Blanks said when asked what Hunter brought over the other candidates. "There were certainly other qualified and safe candidates.

"We felt Lindsey would give us the type of leadership we needed. We can work with him, as we go through this process with the team and the organization."

Yet Hunter has never even participated on a staff that ran a team, schemed the gameplan and organized practices. Blanks explained that "to be a point guard in this league, on some level you are helping the coach carry out his orders."

Blanks hired Hunter initially to do some scouting, then to lead a newly formed player development staff.

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"We just built our relationship in the last couple of years," Blanks said. "I have been very transparent about his role with him. He was on my staff. He challenged our staff, but at no time did I think he would be the head coach here."

Asked why it took a couple of days to name a guy that many predicted would get the job once Alvin Gentry left, Lance Blanks gave an interesting answer for conspiracy theorists to chew on.

"That was a surprising shock to us all," he said. "I am confident saying no one knew. I just walked into it."

"But we did not want to panic. Once things were done and it was clear that we needed a new coach for the balance of the season, then we began the process. At that point, we didn't even know who might want to do it."

There has been some speculation that [Alvin Gentry's](#) separation was not a foregone conclusion, and Blanks' answer certainly supports that.

However, it's no secret that Blanks appreciates the ability to work closely with the next head coach. He talks of a partnership, and certainly that's the goal of any GM and head coach. Lance inherited Alvin Gentry and the team's leadership on the playing court and coaching staff.

Now is Blanks' time to put his own stamp on the team.

Lindsey Hunter prides himself as a no-nonsense guy. His answers were short and to the point.

Asked about Blanks' "jolt" comment, Hunter expounded in a matter-of-fact way, "I think it's from personality. I grew up in a no-nonsense house. I'm just that way."

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Asked what makes him a good coach, he replied with candor (and a chuckle): "We don't know if I'm a good coach yet, right? Since high school I have always felt like a coach on the floor. Being a basketball junkie my entire life has prepared me. Lon and Lance said 'you have a PhD in basketball'. It never gets old to me."

Asked how to walk the line of playing young guys and winning at the same time: "I just walk, don't look at the line. I'll play the guys that play hard, and I can live with that."

He is under no impression that the season will be a cakewalk.

"All of this has been a whirlwind," he said about taking over with 41 games left and no contract past the end of the season. "Just jump in with both feet and hands, and get dirty. There are different things that come about that you have to persevere through."