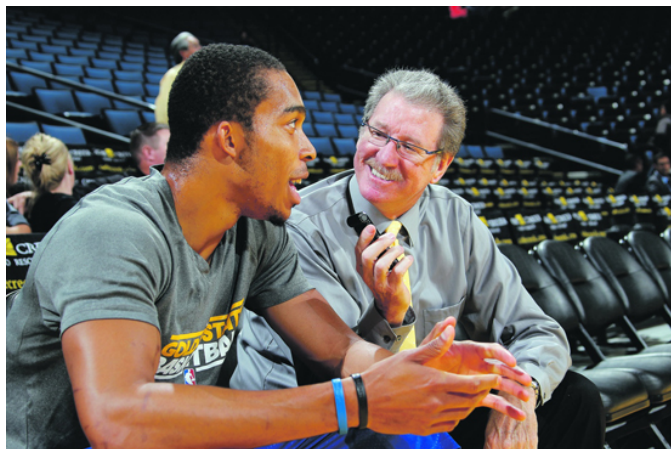


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Barnett, Bar None Warriors color commentator offers inside perspective on job, team

By Caitlin Graveson



Jim Barnett interviewing Lance Goulbourne Oracle Arena at the beginning of October Photo courtesy Golden State Warriors

covering the Knicks. We had just had [my daughter], and so I said no. I went into regular business, sales and stuff. People kept calling me to do college games. The Warriors were sold and they were going to start broadcasting games on TV. So, they hired me and that was the first time I ever solicited for a job.

What do you have to know to be a broadcaster?

To be a broadcaster, the great ones take their ego out of it. You don't do it for yourself, you do it for your audience, someone who has taken the time to sit down and have an interest and watch the game. You want to enhance that experience.

Does it ever get tiring with the long seasons?

The toughest part is having a team that is underachieving. But, I just call the game like it is. Every game is a new game. I haven't lost my enthusiasm, and I think that is the most important thing to have.

Is it hard to call the game when the team or a player is struggling?

You have to be honest, but there is a way to do it. You can point things out without pointing the finger, and you give someone the benefit of the doubt. There is a way to say things without trying to embarrass someone.

What is the best part of your job?

The best part is talking about basketball, which has been such a huge part of my life. I am just inseparable from basketball. I love the NBA. These players are so good. It is great to be part of it, being around the game that defined my life in such a significant way.

Do you have a favorite memory of calling a game?

The Sleepy Floyd game, playing against the Lakers. [Sleepy Floyd] went off and scored 39 points in the second half, 29 in the fourth quarter. I remember a lot of shots he made. And, games from Run TMC. But, I don't really dwell on [specific games] that much.

What do you think of the plans to move the team to San Francisco?

I think it is a real positive step. It is major city, top 5 in the United States. And, to not have a downtown arena, is pretty unusual. And, frankly, when you go around and people ask, "Where is that [golden state]?" They have no idea. So, I think it is time.

The Warriors pride themselves on their fan base, does that affect you at all?

It is much easier to do a game when you have 18-19 thousand people yelling, going crazy like that. The fans help the players. They help the broadcasters as well.

The Warriors made a big trade last season, sending fan-favorite Monta Ellis to the Bucks for center Andrew Bogut. How do you think the Warriors will do this year?

We are finally going to be good, for the first time in a long time. You don't have an opportunity to trade someone who is 6'2 or 6'3 [Monta Ellis] for a big man. [Andrew] Bogut is a legitimate big man.

The Warriors open their season on October 31 against the Phoenix Suns. Their first home game is on November 2 against the Memphis Grizzlies.

Playing professional basketball for 11 years and working as the color commentator for the Warriors for 27 years, Jim Barnett is no stranger to the NBA. His enthusiasm and excitement has not diminished over his tenure. In an interview at his home we asked Barnett, a resident of Orinda for 41 years, about his experiences. With the NBA season opener on October 30, Barnett has high expectations for the Warriors this season.

When did you move to Orinda? What made you stay?

I was traded from the Portland Trailblazers in 1971 and I moved down here. We bought a home in Orinda in June of 1972. It was really a small town then, beautiful. The weather was good. We just fell in love with it.

Did you always know you wanted to be a broadcaster when you stopped playing?

It had never even entered my brain and I fell into it. I was still playing in the NBA. I was back here in Orinda. Bill Russell was supposed to come down and cover the Warriors against the Phoenix Suns playoff game... He couldn't make it. So, someone called me.

How did you get the job with the Warriors?

I was playing for Philly and the president of Madison Square Garden called me. He offered me the TV job

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[back](#)

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