



Meet the New Gopher Freshman, Lawrence Westbrook and Bryce Webster

By Nadine Babu

Webster and Westbrook

Barnyard: What made you decide to come to the U?

LW: I decided to come to the U because it's the Big 10, I think it's the best conference, it's definitely the most physical, I'm a physical player, and I just like everybody on the team and I like the coaches.

BW: I decided to come to the U because it was close to home, a lot of my family live here, and I decided it would be a good fit. I felt really good when the coaches were recruiting me, that's really why I chose to come here.

Barnyard: Have you gotten to play much with your new teammates this summer?

LW: We didn't play in Pulley, but we've been here since the summer so we lived with and played with the guys as a team. A lot of the freshman just came here, but me and Bryce were already acclimated and know where everything is. We've been playing for a long time with everybody.

Barnyard: There has been a lot of talk about whether or not sports forums, like Gopherhole influence a top recruit's decision – do you read any of these forums, and would you ever be attracted or deterred because of what people say about you?

BW: I never read any of that stuff, it really didn't influence me. I wanted to make the decision based on myself, not what other people had to say. It really didn't affect me at all.

LW: I never read stuff on the Internet about basketball because there's going to be as many people that love you and as many people that hate you. The people who say bad things about you have never played the game and they don't know what it's like, some use it as motivation, but I never read basketball site's websites.

Barnyard: There is a lot of exposure being a Big 10 bball player, how do you expect to handle the media and critics?

BW: Well, I haven't experienced any of this yet, but I'm just going to stay humble, I'm going to stay who I am. I just want to be a responsible young man.

LW: I'm just going to go about my business and be a team player. You know, I'll help the team out, and the team will help me out – so that's all I have to worry about.

Barnyard: What roles do you see yourselves playing on this year's team?

BW: First off, I want to do whatever Coach tells me to do. I think maybe I can bring some rebounding and hustle and maybe a little team spirit.

LW: I'm just going to do whatever I need to do to win. If I need to score, I'll score. If I need to play defense, pass, whatever. Whatever needs to be done. I think I can come in and get a lot of points and help us out in that way.

Barnyard: Do either of you have playing experience against other Big Ten players other than your teammates?

LW: I played against one Big Ten player who I think is going to Iowa, Tyler Smith. I played against him last year in prep school. I haven't played against too many people in the Big Ten, I've played against a lot of people in the ACC and Big East though.

BW: I've played against a lot of top players who have gone to colleges throughout the nation. One of my teammates on Howard Pulley was Isaiah Dahlman, and he went to Michigan State, so I played with him. There's a few other guys I played against too.

Barnyard: How will you match up against him when we play MSU?

BW: Well, I've never actually played him in a game, so I look forward to doing that. We're good friends. He sure was good in High School.

Barnyard: Who would you personally say is the best of the Big Ten this year (if you couldn't predict the Gophers)?

BW: Honestly, I don't have any experience in the Big Ten, so I really don't know what to expect. I think the Big Ten is pretty much open, that's what I'm hearing in the locker room.

LW: If I couldn't say Minnesota, I'd have to say nobody, because I'm not going to say anybody besides Minnesota.

Barnyard: You both are highly recruited freshman – do you ever get frustrated when people say MN doesn't recruit well, when the two of you were clearly some of the top recruits in the nation?

BW: Again, I've never heard of any of that, so I wouldn't know what to think.

LW: No, it doesn't really bother me because like I said, there are going to be some people that don't think so. I know the people in Minnesota like us, and that's all that matters.

Barnyard: As you're making a decision where to attend, how does controversy about a head coach and concerns about his tenure affect your thought process?

BW: Again, I don't really read the papers and pay attention to the media. I heard a little bit about it, but that really didn't sway me at all. I was very confident in my choice, and it just felt like a great fit. It was just a great choice, so that didn't really affect me at all.

LW: I like Coach Monson a lot, and I think he can make us a good team and make me better. I don't worry about it, because I think he's going to be here, and I have no control over that anyways.

Barnyard: Are you feeling pressure to produce quickly since there aren't a lot of veterans on the squad and they're still coming together as a team?

LW: I don't think it's pressure, I just think I want to do well. Of course, I don't have the mentality that I'm a freshman and wait your turn; I came here to play right away. I think I put more pressure on myself to do good, because I want to do good for myself, because I have aspirations to go to the next level, the NBA, so I put a lot of pressure on myself.

BW: I don't really feel the pressure because I'm just coming in here working my hardest and learning everyday. Of course I always want to get better. There's not much pressure coming in being a freshman, I just want to learn from the guys that are older than me and have been there for 2 and 3 years. If it comes to be my turn, and hopefully, I'll do what I need to do.

Barnyard: What do they feel you need to develop or refine before the season starts? What do they anticipate they'll discover as the season unfolds?

BW: The biggest thing that I've always talked about in the past is just my physical state. I've felt like I've always wanted to get in shape, and so far during the summer and school this year, I've been working my absolute hardest to get in shape so I can play at this level, because at this level,

a lot of the game is physical. I think that would help me out and help out a lot of areas of my game.

LW: The biggest thing I need to work on is being more vocal on the court. Taking over, because I'm used to playing a 2 guard, but even at the 2 guard position, I need to be more vocal with my team and try to lead more. I can play the 1 and the 2.

Barnyard: College is a big adjustment, are there any particular members on the team that have made your transition more comfortable?

LW: I bonded with everybody, in the summertime; I stayed with Jonathon Williams and J'son Stamper. Jon was my host when I came on my visit. I'm not just saying this because of the interview, and I'm not saying everyone hangs out every night, but everybody is really cool, it's like a family. Everybody has helped me get along to where I am now.

BW: It's a great group of guys, they're all really accepting and we all get along really well. The team and the coaches make it easier to come in as a freshman.

Barnyard: Were you the recipient of any team pranks?

LW: Nothing big, just stupid stuff, like you go in your room and there's toothpaste all over your door handle and you get it all over you.

Westbrook

Barnyard: Can you tell us a little bit about the journey that led you here? Why did you end up going to prep school - and how did you end up here rather than Memphis or Iowa St.?

LW: I averaged 40 points at Arizona, and went to prep school for a greater challenge because I knew coming to college, if it was the Big 10 or wherever I was going to go, was going to be a big conference. I needed to play against older players; most of the guys in prep school are 21 or 22 years old. I was thinking about going to Memphis, but it wasn't really official. I ended up signing at Iowa St., and when Coach Morgan got fired I just re-opened my recruitment and ended up coming here.

Barnyard: Which current gopher does he feel his game is the most similar to?

LW: I think everybody has their own style. My style is that I like to score, and I'll do whatever it takes for us to win.

Barnyard: Do you ever get tips from your cousin, Eagles running back Brian Westbrook on how to compete at a Division one level and deal with the media?

LW: No, because he played football so he can't really tell me anything about basketball, but he just give me cousin tips about stuff. We just really talk about sports, cars, stuff like that, we never really talk about the media.

Barnyard: For all of us fantasy owners, can you comment on how his knew is recovering?

LW: He's fine, there's nothing wrong with him, you can start him.

Barynard: Do you get sick of people like myself asking you about your famous cousin, Brian?

LW: No, no, it's cool to have a cousin in the NFL, especially with a good team like that, so I don't mind it.

Barnyard: What was it like moving cross country from Chandler AZ to Winchedon Prep in Massachusetts?

LW: It was difficult being away from home, but I'm from Massachusetts originally so it wasn't that bad.

Barnyard: How did he hear that Morgan was fired and when did he decide to leave Iowa State?

LW: I was with my brother and I was driving home from a friend's house, it was 1am in the

morning and my Dad called me. He told me Coach and everyone got fired, I thought he was joking at 1st, but then he was serious. When I got home I saw it on SportsCenter, it was just a real shock. Coach called me and everything, but it was a real shock.

Webster

Barnyard: What did you do to work on your game this summer? Who has been helping you along?

BW: Lawrence and I can and shot every night this summer. I just pretty much worked on my mid-range game. It was just him and I basically.

Barnyard: Who recruited you the most from the U?

BW: Coach Monson. He was the one that called me every time and came to see me. It was all Coach Monson. Sometimes all the coaches would be there at one time.

Barnyard: What other schools were you looking at?

BW: I had a big list, but then I trimmed it down to four, my final four were: Boston College, Minnesota, Notre Dame and Marquette. The reason why I looked at a lot of those schools is because they were a lot like my high school and I wasn't sure if I wanted to continue that for another four years, or if I wanted to try something new. The ultimate reason why I picked Minnesota is because it was close to home and all of my family is here. Going to the U allows me to have a really strong support system off the court.

Barnyard: What aspect of his game is he the most happy with?

BW: That's a tough one. I really can't say, especially right now. The one thing I'm pleased with right now is my hustle. Even though I've been tired, that's the one thing I try to maintain, no matter how tired I get, I still go hard. I never skip any reps, I never stop running down the floor.

Barnyard: Spencer gave you a bit of a hard time on Gopher Weekly with the interview at the baseball game, it's your chance to get back at him...who's better, you or Spencer?

BW: I heard about that, somebody said they saw me slipping on the ground. Spencer wasn't even playing, he didn't showcase his skills, I can't really say anything, I would have liked to see him out there.

Barnyard: Can you take Spencer on the basketball court?

BW: (Laughing) I don't want to go there. We'll save that for when he and I are alone.

Barnyard: Did he feel any added pressure to come to Minnesota since he's from here?

BW: You feel pressure to go everywhere, everybody is selling you something else. People are always trying to make one place seem better, but really, no place has the secret ingredient. It's up to the person who's going there to make a final decision.