

# Keeping a low profile, having a big impact

**Kaleb Canales' job title is video coordinator, but he does a whole lot more for the Blazers**

Sunday, November 25, 2007

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The Trail Blazers coach nobody knows about doesn't want this story written about him.

He doesn't want people to know that on most nights he sleeps at the Trail Blazers' practice facility, curling up on the blue leather couch in the players' lounge to catch four hours of sleep between his lengthy list of duties.

He doesn't want the recognition of being the person that forward LaMarcus Aldridge calls his personal coach. Or the guy team leader Brandon Roy says he sometimes seeks out before the other, better-known Blazers assistants.

He doesn't want people to know he is consulted on trade talks, or asked for his input on draft decisions. And he doesn't want people to know that it is he who coach Nate McMillan leans on at halftime to decipher what needs to be addressed during the coach's halftime speech.

No, Kaleb Canales would much rather go on living his own anonymous life, which is largely centered on making the Trail Blazers a better team.

"He is like this guy in the background who goes unnoticed, but he knows and does a lot," McMillan said. "He's the hardest worker here; I really do believe that. I mean, we all work hard, but I've never been around someone who works as hard as him."

Officially, Canales is the team's video coordinator, the person who edits game film for coaches and players to study. But in reality, Canales, 29, has become so respected and so knowledgeable, that McMillan and the players consider him an assistant coach.

"A lot of people don't know what he does, but to me, it's like, 'What doesn't he do?'," Aldridge said. "I don't see him as our film guy, I see him as a coach. I go to him all the time, and we work on drills. He does everything for me, as far as working out, the personal side of things . . . everything. I see him as my own assistant coach."

Added Roy:

"The video stuff he does, that's just a bonus part. The coaching side is what I need Kaleb for. There are times I go to him before the other coaches, just because he is honest and knows what he's talking about. And we work out at night all the time together. It's like he is one of my good friends."

## **Summer league coach?**

General manager Kevin Pritchard said there are tentative plans this season to give Canales a promotion, and McMillan said he has been so impressed with Canales' knowledge that he has visions of letting Canales coach the team's summer league unit down the road. This season, in a subtle promotion, Canales joins the team's coaches on the bench for the second half, after his first-half video responsibilities are completed. But Canales would prefer that none of that would be made public. When approached for this story, Canales respectfully declined, saying, "It's not my place," before darting off to the court in his familiar high-energy trot.

"That's Kaleb for you," Aldridge said laughing. "He doesn't do what he does for recognition. He doesn't want any limelight. He just likes doing what he does."

## **Handling many requests**

The reason why Canales practically lives at the team's Tualatin practice facility is because he does so much for so many people on the team. A typical day last week included a request from McMillan to compile all of

the pick-and-roll plays that New Jersey runs, as well as documenting all the Blazers' inbound plays this season from the sideline. The next morning, McMillan had two DVDs waiting for him.

And Roy said he asked Canales to link together all of his turnovers, and all of his assists, so he could study what was working, and situations where he was getting himself in trouble.

In the meantime, Canales is regularly on the court, usually but not limited to, working extensively with Aldridge on everything from footwork to shooting form to his mental approach.

When the opening tip of a game comes, Canales is in the team's video room, which is attached to the team's locker room. In the video room, he watches the game and identifies where the Blazers need work, as well as where they are succeeding. At halftime, while the coaching staff meets in McMillan's office, Canales is forming a tape of 10 to 12 plays that illustrate what he believes are the game's points of emphasis.

"He has the freedom to pick those clips, and it's a huge responsibility," McMillan said. "He has to know what I want, so he's not only thinking like a coach during a game, but he's thinking like me. It's a lot of work to put that stuff in order. And he does a great job. Let me put it this way: If I ever go anywhere, I would take him with me."