

Raptors' DeMarre Carroll a big fan of Vancouver training camp experience

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By Israel Fehr

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BURNABY, B.C. – Count DeMarre Carroll among the many that would like to see the NBA give Vancouver another shot.

The Toronto Raptors have brought their training camp to the city for the second straight year and will open their preseason schedule at Rogers Arena against the Los Angeles Clippers on Sunday. It's afforded Carroll, who signed a [four-year, \\$60 million free agent contract with the Raptors](#) in the offseason, the opportunity to visit Vancouver for the first time. Like most tourists that come through the city, the 29-year-old Alabama native is very impressed with what he's seen so far.

"This city is great. I heard it was a beautiful city and the people here are nice. What I look for (in a city) is good restaurants, a good vibe, nice scenery. I feel like [Vancouver] has all of that," said Carroll. "I think this city really needs an NBA team, and hopefully it gets one soon."

Over 14 years have passed since the Grizzlies packed up and moved to Memphis, leaving Vancouver after just six seasons of dysfunctional ownership and management, a weak Canadian dollar, and mostly dreadful results. Outside of a few sporadic and ultimately unfounded rumours, there hasn't been much buzz that the NBA will ever return for more than the one preseason game at Rogers Arena every year.

Raptors head coach Dwane Casey has [advocated for the NBA to put teams back](#) in Vancouver and Seattle before, and is always happy to be in the city. Casey also sees the advantages that come with holding training camp away

from home.

"The facilities here are second-to-none," Casey said of the [Fortius Sport & Health](#) centre in Burnaby where the team is practising. "Guys don't go home or back to the hotel between practices. Everything (we need) is here under one roof."

Carroll concurs. As a player getting familiar to a new situation, he finds the environment beneficial to the team-building process.

"I think it's good. It keeps us focused on the task at hand," said Carroll. "Out here, we're kind of in a confined spot. We stay at the hotel and come here for practice and get our work in."

Specifically, it allows the players to bond on and off the court in a way they wouldn't be able to replicate if they were in Toronto.

"Guys are talking and going out to eat. It just shows you that we're coming together as a group and becoming a team," said Carroll.

That's fitting, seeing how the Raptors have made it a priority to become Canada's team. This trip to Vancouver is both for business and marketing.

"Being a Canadian team, the only team in the country, it gives us an opportunity to share a spotlight with the rest of the country," said Casey. "I think we have that obligation as an organization. We owe it to the country of Canada to continue to develop and spread the word of the Toronto Raptors."

For the time being, despite Carroll's well-placed wishes, that's as good as it's going to get for Vancouver. There's no reason to believe a team is coming to town any time soon, but following the [huge success of last year's game](#), the Raptors are back and enjoying every minute of their time here.

The team knows how important it is to start the season on a positive note. It's no accident they've chosen Vancouver as their training camp home once again. The NBA might not value Vancouver as a viable home for a franchise, but the Raptors sure do. Even if it's for just a week.

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