

Nikola Topić- KK Crvena Zvezda- 6 feet 6 inches-200 pounds- 18 years old- Professional

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Source: Branilav Bozovic- Assistant Coach KK Mega Bemax

The source was asked what is the most transferable skillset for Nikola Topić? The source responded that the most transferable skillset for Topić is that first of all he is a great guy. His personality is great because he can definitely adjust to any kind of team. His ego is literally zero so he can really adjust to anyone. He is a really hard worker. He is a great hard worker. After each practice he is the first guy who is going to stay for another shootaround. In Mega they had really long practices. After those practices most of the guys are waiting to end to go home and Topić is one of those guys who always asks the coach if they can take one more shoot around. The source thinks this is great about Topić. As for basketball skills the source is not sure how to say something and not make it sound good enough because the numbers talk. The skillset the source likes the most about Topić is his speed. The source doesn't think about the speed of Topić's running which is what everybody refers to but the decision making speed. He really is the best guy in transition. In transition offense he is really great. Most of his solutions are found in transition. His ability to make quick decisions while running the source thinks that is one of Topić's best skillsets. Also the source doesn't want to emphasize one thing because Topić is also a great pick and roll player. He really is a great creator. It is hard for the source to talk now because Topić hasn't been playing for some time now his best skillset definitely is the speed. If the source had to emphasize one it is speed in terms of speed of decision making, running speed, and driving speed. These are all regarding to speed reactions which is his most dangerous skillset as a player. He can blow by defenders and get to the rim. He can definitely do that. That is one of the things that what the source means when he says that Topić's speed is his best skillset because the source hasn't seen that kind of speed since Shane Larkin that somebody who is staying in place is able to be so fast and to start dribbling and make blow by situations easily. The source really hasn't seen that since Shane Larkin. He reminds the source of Larkin with that play type. About his pick and roll play the source thinks that first of all Topić is very dangerous on the drive because defense always have to adjust to his play. On pick and roll if you hedge for example he is ready to pass to the big guy but if you play some drop defense which most play on him because everybody think that his shooting abilities are maybe his only weak point. If he has a good screen he is able to attack the big man so he is extremely dangerous on drives. He is really dangerous on drives. It doesn't matter if he has weak side help or strong side help or what kind of defense he is really good at reading the pick and roll. His driving speed is one of the things that creates the most advantage because he engages a lot of defenders on him. The second thing that is great from there is he is not selfish. If he engages two guys he passes the ball. He doesn't look for one on two or one on three situations. He has good craftiness and footwork when attacking the rim. This is great. He has great footwork and

especially he has great finishing ability around the rim which is something the source hasn't seen for a while. He has different finishes mostly referring to ball-handling to move the ball to the side when finishing over the big guy to go completely over the guy for the easy layup. This is also one of the decision making skills because at the moment you are going for the rim you also need to read is it a weak side help, is it a shooting guard coming from the weak side help, or is it a power forward so depending on that he chooses the finishing type. This is maybe one of the hardest things that you can do because you have 2 or 3 seconds mostly if you have a hard drive from somewhere half-court in transition. You have 2 or 3 seconds and in those 2 or 3 seconds you need to read the defense, you need to see the big man, and if you are not choosing to pass it to the big man but going all the way you need to make a decision what kind of finishing is it or is it a kickout. The thing is that in those situations in 95 percent of the times he makes the right decisions. His passing is mostly in the pick and roll but it is connected to dribble penetration. These two things are connected because a lot of his pick and roll game goes on the drive because now against most of the teams played in drop defense so he had a lot of space to go for a drive and he used it. There were some situations where on strong hedges he really just makes a one strong defensive dribble and pass it quickly mostly to a short roll man because he is mostly open. He is not a selfish guy but also if he has the space to drive then he is going to drive. He makes athletic passes in mid air. He makes those passes. He makes passes in jump but those passes mostly happen because that is something he practices. They practice stop on both feet and jumping before the pass especially when they play drive and kick game. This is something they do as a system in Mega MIS. Maybe this is a consequence of the practice also but especially when they have a strong hedge and you don't have a high guard who is guarding him in these cases they emphasize him to pass the ball over the top off the jump maybe because it is easier to hit the roll man especially on their team with 217 centimeters tall it is easy to pass it inside and it is much easier to pass it over the top. This helps him pass through length mostly. As a driver he changes speeds and directions really well. He is great at that especially at changing speeds. The source can't say Topić is bad at changing directions but he has incredible ability to go slow especially in transition he starts pushing the ball slow just to put the defender to get him a little bit sleepy to put him out of the focus and then he speeds up in like split second and just to go hard to the rim. This is easy points each time for him.

The source was asked how Topić was being defended at the international level compared to how he will be defended on the NBA level? The source responded that defense is much different. Defense there is much different especially when a young player comes in. When somebody who is young and become famous everybody wants to knock him out and knock him down on the floor because they see a threat in him. The source thinks in the NBA it is slightly different because there is a lot of young players over there and not all players show up like Victor Wembanyama that he is a wonderkid. There is also other young players who are not getting so much attention. In Europe young players with attention is always a threat and they always try to put him down as fast as possible. With Topić's speed and decision making in NBA the source thinks that he would be really tough to guard. This is because he is feeling best when he is in the

situations on open court when he receives the ball the outlet pass on the fly or he has a lot of space for driving because that is the main room for his creation. At the international level the way opposing teams guarded him depends on their team. This depends on the dimensions of their team but most of the teams would look to crowd the paint. They would definitely look to crowd the paint because he is much more dangerous on the drive than from the perimeter which doesn't mean he is a bad shooter. He just has much better percentages when he has an open court and he has an open way to go to the rim.

The source was asked about his thoughts about Topić's aggressiveness during games? The source responded that on defense Topić can definitely improve. He can definitely improve on defense. This doesn't mean that he is a bad defender. It is just a lot of pressure and a lot of times there he had 30 or more minutes on the court and you can't expect a player who is playing big minutes to have good activity on both sides so they tolerated even some bad defense which is normal in order for what is coming from him in offense. In this case yes he definitely could improve defensively but the source thinks this is something that is depending more on his play type because if you expect too much from him on offense you can't expect so much on defense. You can't expect him to go both ways in big minutes but in general he is definitely a player who can play defense. In some strong system in the NBA or some European system it doesn't matter he is definitely a player that can play good defense. It is not extraordinary defense but good defense. The ways Topić shows his aggressiveness on offense is mostly on driving. Mostly on driving his aggressiveness is over there because reading the defense on the play type he is mostly in pick and roll and isolation games. He mostly tries to drive aggressively to attack the paint and to find some solutions out from there because if they crowd the paint which is what most of the teams do when he is on the drive he looks for a kick out. This is where all of his creation comes from. The ways Topić can improve his defensive aggressiveness is definitely he can improve his off the ball defensive aggressiveness. If you relieve him from some obligations in offense then he is definitely going to improve in defense because the energy he spends handling it and the thinks that is just a part of regular practice can improve. It is a simple way. It is not that he needs some technical abilities or anything else. The coaches need to change the way that they are using him in order to get the best of him. Sometimes he gets lost with off-ball defense. Yes sometimes but it is hard to tell it now because this season is really his great season and it was specific. In Mega it is specific they really do the best that they can to improve them at all levels but also they tolerate some things. Their coach really tolerates some things in order to get the best of him so yes it sometimes happens that he gets caught on the off-ball sleeping and sometimes comes back but really it is not a common thing. When he is at most aggressive version he looks like definitely as a driver. In their system it is 60 percent transition where he gets the ball and all the points come from there. He gets the ball and he really has a great coast to coast game. He is able to create 20 points in one quarter if defense is not adjusted. Mostly after the defensive rebound or turnover he really rushes down the court and that is his biggest level of his aggressiveness and his points come from there. The source would say that maybe the best explanation for Topić would be medium aggressive because even

though he is a young guy he shows a really great level of experience. It is crazy to say something like that but he reads the moment of the game. In some moments the rhythm of the game falls down and in those moments he also slows the game because he also needs some time to catch up and to catch some breath. In those moments he really use that to rest when there are no points, there are slow offense, and no transition game he use those moments to catch some breath and after that he waits and he just feels. This is something that you can't learn. He feels the moment when he needs to speed up the pace. Again he creates great aggressiveness in those moments so in this case the source can say that Topić is mid level aggressive. He also can control the game. He is not a driver that drives for the rhythm all the time. He also can control the game so maybe the mid level aggressiveness would be the best explanation for him.

The source was asked how he feels about Topić's ability to perform under pressure and in big moments? The source responded that it is great. It is really great. This is one of the traits that Topić has that is something that also you cannot learn. He can perform great under the pressure. He doesn't feel the pressure. They had some games this year where it was really tough and you see it on the look of his face and you see it with his body language and everything that he is 100 percent focused. The source is sure that Topić is feeling the pressure but he is not showing it and the game that he is playing is not showing it so the source thinks that Topić is really great under the pressure. He definitely shows a calmness and poise late in games. It is not that he always looks for the ball in the clutch moments for him to find the best solution but he is always calm when the coach says we run this offense, we do this, and we do that. If it is an offense for his play or somebody else it doesn't matter. He is really calm and he is a great in organization in those moments. He is a well rounded player and really does everything well late in games. He also has a good off the ball move which is not so much characteristic for his position because most of the time he spends with the ball because he is the creator but he also has qualities with some surprising touch or he is also good in closeout situations. One more thing that he maybe can improve also but definitely can be one of his qualities is offensive rebound because he is almost 2 meters tall which is pretty big for a guard in Europe so that is really something that he has as an additional quality. He is 2 meters tall and decides he is very fast so the source thinks that is a really great combination for Topić. In general he is mostly the best on the ball in pick and roll situations, isolation situations, and transition. He is the go to guy and go to scorer. He is a guy that enjoys this but not a guy that would take it if it is not required of him. An example is if coach says let's play pick and roll with 9 seconds and they look for off-screen exits on the opposite side he would look for an off-screen exit. He wouldn't go for one on one game or for his own points. He is a guy who would pass the ball. What happens is that he has a lot of attention on him for like a few years ago since he was in youth categories and now he is the guy that you would want to put the ball into his hands in the clutch moments.

The source was asked how he feels about Topić's physicality and if he's ready to play at the next level? The source responded that definitely Topić is ready. He has great physicality. He had that unfortunate injury this year when he went from their

system to Red Star. Working with him the source saw that Topić is really ready to play at top level basketball. He is definitely ready. There are no adjustments the source would like to see Topić make to his body. There is nothing that the source would refer to. He is strong enough, he is tough, he is fast, and he is tall which is everything you need from a good point guard. His vertical is also great. There isn't anything that the source could emphasize and say that Topić could improve at that level. He just needs to keep doing what he is doing. As a point guard he just needs to grab as much experience as he can. This is something that time will show. He has more than enough time. He has his whole career in front of him and the source thinks that everything is going to be ok.

The source was asked what are Topić's motives to play the game at the next level? The source responded that Topić's motives to play at the next level is that he just loves basketball. The source can't say that Topić is run by financial motives, fame, or anything. He is a pretty decent guy. He is not so shabby. He is just a regular guy playing basketball and he enjoys it. The way he shows his love for the game is true work. It is definitely true work. He is so humble. He is really humble and you see on every practice he wants to do extra. When coaches finish the practice they all can't wait for Topić to ask them to help him do this or that. They always want to help him by asking him is there something special that he wants to work on and if he doesn't have anything special then they give him some additional exercises where he needs to work on anything that the head coach wants to but he really enjoys it each time. When they have a morning practice for like 3 hours which is a really tough practice and after that he asks the coach can you please help me make some shootarounds or do something special. You see that he enjoys it.

The source was asked what kind of teammate Topić is? The source responded that Topić is a great teammate. He is a great teammate. As the source said in the beginning Topić is the guy who can be in any kind of system with any players because he doesn't have ego, he is not selfish, and he is willing to help. He is also somebody that you can rely on not only as a coach but as a person in general. The interactions with his teammates are great interactions. Everybody loves him. Mega is one of the teams that gathers the top prospects from whole Europe so a lot of guys want to be the ones that are the best on the team which is normal. That is something normal. When Topić was there everybody was ready to subject to his play types because everybody prospered from that. Everybody got everything from his game. He is definitely a leader. He is both a leader by example and vocal leader. He is definitely extremely vocal which is something they really liked. He is so loud that it cannot happen that somebody didn't hear what they play, what the system is, or should he make a cut or not. He also lead by example. When somebody is struggling on the court on defense he is ready to step up and say let's switch. He is definitely one of the guys you would want on your team. The source believes Topić can be a franchise player with these characteristics. Teammates react really well to his leadership style. The source honestly didn't expect to react it so well because of everything that he said. They are all great guys but all of them are fighting there way through for their careers and all of them really responded really well

to Topić's leadership style. It was really much enjoying for them as his coaches to be with them.

The source was asked how is Topić's ego and if he is coachable? The source responded that Topić is very coachable. He is definitely very coachable. His ego is that he is the good kid from the hood. He is really coachable because they spend a lot of time to find something that he is not good at. They even tried to make up new exercises for him to practice some new things to make it harder for him in order to improve more. When they find those exercises and they put something for him in that way he is not the guy who gets annoyed or anything but he stays focused and keeps working. You see that he is starting to feel angry that he wants to jump out of this gym but he keeps working. Whatever you tell him and whatever advice that you give him he literally at the same moment puts it into work so he is definitely one of the coachable guys. He responds pretty well to criticism from the coaching staff. When you coach him at this level there is not much criticism that they gave him but when you give him the criticism he is a guy who accepts it completely and tries to improve. The source wouldn't like to see Topić have more of an ego. Topić is literally the ideal personality for a basketball player. He is the guy who can handle pressure, and he is the guy who can handle criticism, he is the guy who asks the questions but not the way that he get annoying or the way that he is looking for attention that way. He always has a reasonable question and he is the definition of a good guy. The source wouldn't want Topić to change in any way in his personality.

The source was asked how is Topić's work ethics and if he does more than what is required? The source responded that Topić definitely does more than required. In their system they practice for 5 hours almost every day and some of those practices are really tough and after each practice you have a guy who asks you to do something additional after 5 hours of practice there is not much more to say about his extra work. What Topić asked of the source was to cut and prepare the games that they played before and to prepare the video for him to see where he is making the mistakes. That is something that he mostly wanted to do.

The source was asked what is Topić's level of basketball IQ and if he can carry over the scouting report to the court? The source responded that Topić can definitely carry over the scouting report. The source created most of the scouting reports especially personal characteristics and the source can tell us that there are some things that Topić even did better than the source because when they give the basic information and they give some specific information most of the players in their league see and also experience their experience players and they change their play type during the game. They change the side where they drive more and they change the way that they play and he is great at adjusting to those things. He is one of the guys who often has the question after the scouting report how should they defend this and how should they defend that. Of course they go through that on the court afterwards but he always asks what about if this happens, what about if that happens, and what about if they switch to some other defense should we look for that pass for short roll pass or kick out. He really thinks about basketball all the time. He lives basketball. The source is fine with Topić

asking questions. It is completely ok. He is not annoying. He doesn't ask you that each time. If something is clear there is no need for asking so he doesn't ask but some specific games they know that they can expect different defense and then he asks some of those questions. In general he mostly receives the information very well and it is clear to him everything that they do. They take into consideration what he says when he says we should do this instead of that. They take that into consideration. This didn't happen much this season. He just asks the coach they are trying to close me should I pass to the big man because I know that he is open all the time or should we look for the kick out or extra pass outside. This is up to the coach to make a final decision but always when Topić has some advice it is something that makes sense. It is definitely something that makes sense. Topić has a great basketball IQ. The way he shows his basketball IQ is his level of reading is really great. You can see this best through his decision making at that level of speed. It doesn't matter what play type is it. That is something that you can see in those situations because he always makes the right decisions. The source thinks this is the basic definition of basketball IQ to make the right decision at the right moment and Topić does that at a fast speed so that is definitely one of his top qualities. The scouting reports at Mega they try to keep it simple. They keep it simple. They don't have very detailed scouting reports because they are young players and they are not so experienced. They all think that it would be too much for them and it would maybe break their focus at some moments to kill them with all the scouting reports so they try to give them basic information and some specifics additionally. They don't try to overwhelm them with the information.

The source was asked how Topić responds to in game adjustments? The source responded that they don't have much adjustments. They have systems in general who are defined but Topić adapts well especially when they talk about individual characteristics for example for players on defense or offense doesn't matter. He responds very well. The type of in game adjustments that Topić had to respond to are some teams regard them as a bad shooting team so they crowd the paint in that case and they have to for example change the offense to set play and in those moments he is not one of those guys who is looking to take the three-point shot because he is open but he stays open and he keeps the set play to find the best position whether if it is a three-point shot, cut, or drive. He is definitely somebody that can adjust to different play types.

The source was asked what will be one reason Topić will be successful and one reason he will not be successful at the next level? The source responded that Topić will be successful because the pace that he is playing at right now is something that would be really appreciated in the NBA by pushing the ball that fast and have those decisions. This is something that definitely in the NBA would be a great quality with the type that they are playing now. The thing that would maybe be a bad quality would be maybe defense off the ball. It would be off the ball defense. This is definitely something that he can improve. The ways he can go about improving that is only practice. There isn't something specific that he can do it. It is something about the practice. You work everyday and you work hard and that is it. He has shown flashes of playing good off ball

defense to the source. There are some games where he is overwhelmed with the minutes and you can't expect him to play both ways but there are also some games where they try to reduce his minutes because he was tired and everything and in those situations he really responds well in all kind of defense whether it is on-ball or off-ball defense.

The source was asked if Topić ever failed a drug test? The source responded that he knows Topić has never failed a drug test but the source is not sure that Topić did one. They have regular examinations and health checkings but the source is not sure if they test them for drug tests. The source is sure that Topić doesn't use any illegal substances.

The source was asked if there are any personal and social red flags for Topić? The source responded that there are no personal and social red flags for Topić. There are definitely none.

The source was asked how is Topić's competitive level in practice and does he push others? The source responded that Topić has a great level of competitiveness in practice because in general they have a really high level of competitiveness in practices and he pushes the other guys well. He really pushes. He is a great teammate because he is ready to step in for others. It doesn't matter if he needs to score or playmake but also on defense he is the one that can step in and say let's switch. The source thinks this is great because not a lot of guys would do that. The ways that he shows his competitiveness in practice are by wanting to win every game. It doesn't matter if it is five on five, two on two, or one on one. It doesn't matter if it is a shooting or something else he is the guy who wants to win. This competitiveness is contagious among teammates but in a positive way. The source doesn't think in general that Topić creates it contagious the way that other guys want to win at all costs. Yes they want to win but not that way. It is the right way that he creates competitiveness because even if they lose in the game he is not the guy who would become angry because he lost. He will say we will do it better next time.