

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Darius Bazley Press Conference



Q. Any significance to the new number 55?

DARIUS BAZLEY: No, just felt it was time for a change.

Q. You were pretty effective as a small ball center last year. What are some of the keys to being effective against guys that are a lot bigger than you?

DARIUS BAZLEY: I think it's kind of stuff that like I just possess that they don't. Like my size and theirs, maybe I'm quicker than another guy. That's usually what it is, quicker or more mobile. Like me at 5, sometimes when you have a center defensively, you might want to use drop or whatever coverage. I'm able to switch on to guys. I think maybe some of the advantage is with me being like sized, long enough to defend them down low and then defensively just being able to switch on to screens and then offensively being able to use my speed and stuff.

Q. You said it was time for a change. Is it just a simple thing as changing a number, or is it symbolic of other changes that you want to make maybe on the basketball court, off the basketball court? What does it mean?

DARIUS BAZLEY: When I say time for a change, it's just -- I think this summer was very different for me. But I just felt like urged by -- I don't know, it was just time for a change. There's a lot of changes that have happened, and I wanted to go back to a number that I've worn before.

Q. This is a big year for you. What's one thing that you want to improve this season over past years?

DARIUS BAZLEY: It's kind of hard to just point out one thing. I believe this year everything will just elevate.

Q. You dropped some songs in the summer. Can we expect more music?

DARIUS BAZLEY: No.

Q. You were a pretty good rim protector last season.

Is that something you can build on, sort of establish the reputation of being a good presence in the post?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah. I mean, if somebody goes up, I'm going to challenge it every time. If I get a block or an altered shot or whatever it is, that's what comes with it. There's nobody I'm not going to just not jump with.

Usually if you do that and you're blocking shots, then I'm sure that's the label that will come with it. So maybe. But it's not like I'm going into the season like I want to be the best shot blocker in the league. I'm just doing whatever I can.

Q. With the shot blocking numbers going up, is that just a byproduct of more time in the league, more experience? Is it film study? Is it a combination of both of those things? And is it more like exhilarating to you to block a shot when somebody is trying to bring it up, dribble and go for a shot or coming from the weak side and blocking a shot?

DARIUS BAZLEY: It's more instinct than anything, just like timing a guy up. Honestly, it just depends. It's probably more exciting if someone is trying to dunk on me and I block it.

But I like blocking someone's jump shot, as well, too, just because it makes you feel small.

Q. This is the longest reason since your rookie year. How did that help you in your development, and how does it feel to get back to a sense of normalcy?

DARIUS BAZLEY: I think a longer off-season helped just because it's more time, more days, more hours, more everything to just prepare and work on your game.

But I think for me it was more so like what I was doing and not how long I was doing it. Just being like very intentional.

But like I said, I think that was good because to be able to create habits when you have a month to do it or to create habits when you have a week to do it, you'd rather take the month just because you have more -- like I said, more days, more hours, whatever. Like you have more time to just continue to keep doing that thing every single day.



Q. Do you prefer a shorter or longer off-season?

DARIUS BAZLEY: I really don't care because I feel like the type of basketball that -- we're not going to get used to just long off-seasons. Sometimes off-seasons save a team in the Finals is shorter than a team that doesn't even make the Playoffs. It's not so much so I prefer long or short but just the quality of work that you put in I think matters the most.

Q. Not specifically you, but I think a real underrated aspect of the game is you've got to be able to block out outside noise. Can you talk about the mental preparation it takes to make sure you block out the noise of social media?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah, that's a good question. It can be, just because especially nowadays, like when you come up, everything is so -- a lot of things are for the media. A lot of things you see, a lot of views and like understandings of things that you get comes from the media. It can be kind of hard not to try to mimic that or I wouldn't say live for that, but to perform for that.

In this league, in this setting, there's a lot that goes into it because it's not just the media. You have people around you, friends and family who may not understand or some people -- not my situation, but some people, like your agency or fans, and then you can get into like the media part, just like seeing what everyone has to say. There's different narratives and perspectives of everything.

But we were kind of talking about it today. It's just like, just try to eliminate as much distractions as you can. It's hard because a lot of people have a lot to say about situations nowadays, but you've just got to kind of value those that matter, and then the ones that don't, try your best to filter that stuff out, let it go one ear and out the other, or whatever it is that you have to do during the season. If you want to let someone run your social so you're not logging in and seeing this, that and the third that you have to do. But it can be challenging because I think a big part of the game is mental, and that bleeds over into confidence and stuff like that.

A lot of people are in the NBA obviously for a reason, and sometimes you see guys may not perform as well as they can or whatever the case is going on, just because it's like a big, big mental aspect.

Q. What are your early impressions of the rookies?

DARIUS BAZLEY: They work hard. They're really good. We've been playing like some pickup and stuff this summer. Like I said, they all work hard, and they're all

super talented.

Q. Were there any communication hurdles having two rookies with the same name?

DARIUS BAZLEY: No. I mean, not within us. We call Dub "Dub," and then I just call the other one J. I hope you guys know who I'm talking about, too.

Q. It's not that easy to remember.

DARIUS BAZLEY: Dub is the darker one and J is the lighter one. That's how I view it. I can't do like numbers and -- it's just Dub and then there's J.

Q. You look bigger; did you add more weight training to your regimen this summer?

DARIUS BAZLEY: I did. I had a goal to play at 220 this year, and right now I'm doing a good job of sustaining that weight. I was playing at 208 last year and I'm 220 now.

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