

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Gordon Hayward

Press Conference



Q. You got a chance to be part of a really special young group of guys just going through the first time, what was maybe the most rewarding part of this experience, even though it didn't end the way you guys wanted it to?

GORDON HAYWARD: I think just seeing all these guys experience it, for some of them, the first time, is a cool experience to be a part of. You can just see them learning and growing. Certainly will use these moving forward.

Q. With a guy like Shai specifically, where so much attention is on him as a lead playmaker, how did you view the way he attacked that responsibility, had so much going on personally and professionally and was able to deliver the way he delivered this season?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, he was unreal, not only in the postseason, but obviously the entire year, to lead the team to the Number 1 seed in the West. I know he puts a lot into it.

Like I said a little bit ago, he'll only get better from these situations. Start to learn and figure out how teams will guard you. I thought he handled it all really well. Obviously came up a little bit short, but he was tremendous.

Q. This is the first time you've been given a smaller role on a team. Can you describe the ups and downs in that for you?

GORDON HAYWARD: Obviously disappointing with kind of how it all worked out. This is not what I thought it would be. Certainly frustrating. But kind of it is what it is. We have a great team here with great young players, a great coach. So the future is bright.

Q. What did you think it would be when you came to the team?

GORDON HAYWARD: I feel like as a player I have a lot to offer. I just wasn't given much of an opportunity to do that,

and I kind of thought I was going to get that opportunity.

Like I said, I get it. We were rolling before I got here. I've said that before. It's hard to bring somebody in middle of the season, especially a player like me who's had responsibility and lots of it and been through a lot.

Q. Is that in terms of kinds of touches you were getting or minutes? What is that like for you? What would the ideal role look like for you?

GORDON HAYWARD: I think the minutes were certainly down and sporadic, obviously to a point where it was nonexistent. Then just when I was out there is limited touches, I would say.

Q. Obviously, you kind of got phased out in the second round. What did you expect that to look like in the postseason? When you joined the team, did you expect to (inaudible) contribute to the postseason?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, as I said, I thought it would look differently. It is what it is. It was not that.

Q. Were there parts of the series you feel you could have inserted yourself in?

GORDON HAYWARD: Sure. I still have ultimate confidence in myself, and I absolutely believe that I could have helped, but that's not to take away anything from the other players that we had. I thought we did a tremendous job fighting and gave ourselves a chance there.

Like I said earlier, this team has got great players, a great coach. So they'll be good for years to come.

Q. What is that balance like knowing as a player you still have juice left, you want to assert yourself, but also like I know Mark said you weren't brought in as a staffer, but maybe lending some of that -- what's that balance of you're committed and frustration?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, it's a tough balance. I think just on my end it was kind of disappointing and frustrating how it worked out, but it is what it is. It's kind of out of my control, to be honest.

Q. Did you at any point feel like yourself physically?

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GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, after the first month or so when I was coming back from the calf strain, after like a month or so, completely fine, yeah.

Q. You felt like you were getting your timing back every night?

GORDON HAYWARD: After a month or so, I felt I was getting my rhythm and timing back. It was kind of difficult to find a rhythm kind of how I was played and the opportunities I got, but certainly physically I felt fine.

Q. This organization is spoken really highly of in terms of the way they treat that players. Did you get that same feeling?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yes, it's a tremendously run organization from top to bottom. They do a great job. Stuff outside of basketball, the basketball piece, they're definitely first tier.

Q. The whole mental aspect of this process, how tough was that to do just mentally?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, like I said, it was frustrating. It's a position I've never been in. Like I said, I didn't expect it going into it. Certainly frustrating.

Q. Gordon, you played with one of the all time rim protectors in Rudy Gobert. Their body styles are different, but did you see the similar shot blocking abilities from Chet?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, it's the timing. Even Rudy as a young player, he had great timing. It took Rudy a little longer to get going. This is arguably Chet's first year, so I thought he was tremendous protecting the rim for us. He just has a knack for knowing when to stay down on the ground and use his length and knowing when to come from the weak side.

You certainly can see the natural like timing that they both have.

Q. Going back to the frustration there, you said as the season went on that maybe this role or situation may take away some of your love for the game or anything like that?

GORDON HAYWARD: I think it certainly was taxing mentally, so I don't know if it would take away my love for the game. Basketball has been my life for the last 20 -- I guess I'm 34 now. 28 years, 29 years. I still love the game.

Q. Have you thought about what might be next for you?

GORDON HAYWARD: No. It's been kind of a long road trip here. I'm excited to get back to my family. I know they're excited to see me. Take a deep breath and figure out what will be next.

Q. What was your thoughts on Mark?

GORDON HAYWARD: I think he's a great young coach, extremely prepared, hard worker. I think some of the stuff that he's doing is unique and kind of new and really smart. Just little nuances, kind of the game within the game, things that he does and tricks to kind of win a possession back or win -- get a quick bucket.

The jump ball from yesterday is a good example. It's a design play that he came up with, him and his staff. I think the staff was tremendous too.

Q. In the minutes you did get, what led to the low volume of shots and kind of low offensive impact you had when you were out there?

GORDON HAYWARD: I think that's credit to kind of the role that I was placed in and just lack of touches.

Q. So maybe external spectators would say that you wouldn't look to shoot the ball. How much would you agree with that?

GORDON HAYWARD: I think with the minutes that I was given, and like I said, the role that I was in, I think there might have been some possessions where I probably could have been more aggressive. But it's not like when you get in the game, you're just given an open shot.

I'm not the kind of player to just go one-on-one first time I get it and take a tough, contested shot. Just trying to do what's best for the team. With the opportunities I was given, it was tough to make an impact, have too much on your plate.

Q. Did you ever sit down and talk about your role before?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, we had talked about it, and kind of it was what it was. I don't have much else to say about it.

Q. Overall the feeling seems to be that you still feel like you have a lot left in the tank. Is that how you feel?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, like I said, I'm still confident in the player that I am.

Q. What is it with calf injuries? It seems like a bunch of players in the league have calf injuries.

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, I don't know. I know they're pretty difficult to deal with. I think the injury thing, for me, it's -- since my major injury, it's been pretty frustrating. I was extremely healthy until then.

Q. With all the talk about your role, just touches and everything else, do you feel it's hard that you were forced to fit into this tight space as a player, per se?

GORDON HAYWARD: Yeah, I just think I was trying to help us in any way I could. In the role that I was given, I tried to do my best there.

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