

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Josh Giddey

Press Conference



Q. Josh, the intense playoff battles, the way this thing continued throughout the season, and yet J-Will is always wrestling you and hugging you and all that sort of stuff. How did you guys keep the mood and the vibe around this team that was so vibrant, even in the intensity of these moments?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, you're on the road, you're down 3-2, and you're in an elimination game, it can be easy to get nervous. We have a group of guys that wants those moments and sticks together and comes together even more when times get tough.

It's been like that all year. It's been like that all year, especially last night in the biggest game of the season. Even in the warmups, the pregame, the flight to Dallas, we're all still so connected together. We're such a young team to be that way. It kind of speaks volumes to the guys we have in the locker room.

They're an impressive group of guys, and I think last night is only going to make us stronger and better as a team.

Q. How would you summarize this season for you?

JOSH GIDDEY: It was up-and-down the whole time. It's not a secret. I mean, as a team, from where we've come from two years ago when we won 20-something games to where we are now, 1st seed, 57 wins, play is going to grow. We've got such a good team with so many weapons.

We started the same way all year, but when it comes to playoffs, it becomes sort of that chess match. Coaches make adjustments according to the other team and how you're getting guarded and schemed. It's just part of the game.

I took it on the chin and kept moving forward and tried to be the best teammate I could be from the role I was playing on the bench.

That's just what happened and that's just how the series

unfolded. I love Isaiah; that's my guy. I was really happy for him to get that opportunity to start in playoff games.

As I said, the first -- probably the first two games of the playoffs against Dallas, I didn't play a lot, and I was not playing well, and I was probably in my own head. I wasn't being a good teammate. I just felt bad. Like even after we won Game 1, I just was trying to be happy, but I was also so worried internally, like I couldn't fully get around the guys the way I wanted to. It was a bad feeling.

From that point on, I made a promise to myself that whether I play 5 minutes or 40 minutes, I'm going to be the best teammate I can be. I'm going to be up off the bench cheering for the guys and being supportive. That was kind of the mindset I took into the next three games. Love my teammates, so I just wanted to be there for them as much as I could. That was kind of my approach to those last three games.

Q. What are your expectations; do you see yourself here long term?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I love it here. This is a home away from home. I love everything about this place, the city, the fans. The organization top to bottom is just unbelievable people throughout the building, and getting to come here to work every day is a lot of fun. It doesn't feel like work.

Every time I wake up in the morning, I'm excited to be here. I'm excited to see the guys. Even through times throughout the year where maybe it was dark days, maybe things weren't going great, getting to come in here every day and see my teammates made everything better. I just love the group of guys we've got and excited to keep growing with them and with Mark. Everybody top to bottom has been unbelievable for me this entire season. I just love coming to work here every day.

Q. You said you didn't feel like you were being a good teammate. What led to overcoming that specifically and turning that corner?

JOSH GIDDEY: Probably my dad. He was always really big on being a good teammate. I've always been a position where I've played a lot of minutes to start my whole life. When suddenly things don't happen the way you want them to and the way you think they're going to pan out,



how do you react?

The first couple games, I probably was just so self-centered and worried about me that it impacted the way I was supporting my teammates and being a good teammate.

So I wanted to change that, and I wanted to have just the right approach to it where, as I said, whether I'm playing 5 minutes or 30 minutes, I'm there for my guys. I'm supporting them the whole time. I'm up off the bench. I'm cheering, being loud and energetic.

This is new to me. I've always played a lot of minutes and started my whole life, and for that to change like that, I had to adapt and just be the best teammate I could, and as I said, whether I was on the floor or not, doing my part to help our team get through to the next series.

Q. Was that the first time you felt like that this year?

JOSH GIDDEY: No, to be honest, no. Especially earlier in the year, when you're on a roller coaster of a season, you start to get in your own head and maybe doubt yourself and things like that. I was lucky. I had good people around me that cared for me and helped me. As I said, I just wanted to be a better teammate, and I wanted to support the guys and do my part to help our team be the best we could.

Q. Josh, you're 21. Over the course of this season being in the position that you guys are as a team, you've seen just about every defensive coverage you possibly can. How armed maybe do you feel heading into an off-season of work and next year of like, okay, I've now seen the full menu of what teams can throw at us. Does that kind of charge you up heading into an off-season?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yes, 100 percent. I guess having a series like the last one is probably something I need. As a 21-year-old to have this early in my career where you go through a series like that where you start the whole season and you don't play a lot of minutes, that's probably what I need to be honest.

There's obviously a lot of things I've got to work on in the summer. I probably don't sound so excited, but I really am, to get back home and work on the things I need to. National team obviously with the Olympics, and there's a lot of things I need to work on and get better at.

It's easier to sit there and point the finger at people and say I should have played more, but I'm the first person to look in the mirror and say I've got to be better. I will be. There's

a lot of things I have to work on. That's what the summer is for. That's what the off-season is for.

I can't wait to get back next season and show that I'm a different player, and to never let what happened this series to happen again.

Q. You finished the season strong. Is this just a product of a team that devised something you just couldn't get out of?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, as I said, it's a chess match. You play the same team seven times in a row, they're going to make adjustments, we're going to make adjustments. They made some. We knew they were going to cross-match going into the series, and we tried to find ways to attack it.

There was probably better matchups for us on the floor at the time. Obviously I was struggling. Coach did what he thought was best for the team. To be honest, I probably agree with him. As hard as it is for a player to sit there and say, I should be on the bench, at the time, Cason, Isaiah, these guys were probably better in the series for Dallas. It's a tough pill to swallow, but as I said, for a 21-year-old to go through this now, it's probably good for me.

As I said, I just -- I don't want to feel this feeling again. It will make me a lot better and stronger as a player to never let something like this happen again.

Q. Josh, what this year was for everybody, what did you learn about this season and about this team?

JOSH GIDDEY: Great group of guys from top to bottom. Not even just the locker room. You go from the front office to the equipment manager and everybody in between. It's just about the entirety of the organization. Players love each other. As I said, coming to work every day is fun. We enjoy being here, being around each other.

Yeah, it's just a great group of guys to be around. We enjoy spending time with each other. I think our chemistry off the floor helps on the floor.

There's a lot I could say, but I think it's very well-known. We all love each other. It's such a close group. I just can't wait -- I'm going to miss these guys over the summer. These are genuinely my brothers. I love these guys. It's tough to get away from them.

I know this is all going to make us stronger, this loss and what we went through this season, how close we are. This is going to help so much as a team. I know guys are ready to come back and get to it next year.

Q. Josh, with playing in the Olympics, people say that helps them get into the next year's NBA season. First, how much are you looking forward to playing with Australia in the Olympics? And do you feel like that will help you come into the next season a little bit more in rhythm?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, definitely. Obviously we had the World Cup last summer. I think it's good just to keep playing basketball, just to say in game shape, in touch with a real five-on-five game with referees and everything. That's what I'm excited about.

I mean, it's the Olympics. I've dreamt of being in the Olympic games since I was a little kid, growing up and watching guys I'm going to play with in this Olympics on TV. This is what I've wanted my whole life, to represent my country in the Olympic games. To have a chance to do that, it's exciting.

Basketball in Australia is as good as it's ever been. I'm excited to play with the group that we've got and just to continue playing basketball throughout the summer and not have four or five months without playing games.

Q. Could you envision yourself as a little kid playing basketball in the Olympics?

JOSH GIDDEY: Everyone dreams big when they're young. It probably seems so far away when you're a kid, but it's something that I always wanted to do. Between the NBA and representing my country, that was my top two priorities growing up as a basketball player.

As I said, I watched it on TV when I was -- I remember missing days of school to sit at home watching the Olympics. To be able to go to Paris this summer and then play in it with my country is right up there with the top of -- for an Australian kid, that's almost the pinnacle of basketball.

Q. How much do you think playing with Australia is going to help your game for the NBA?

JOSH GIDDEY: A lot. Obviously it's a different role. I'm going to have the ball in my hands a lot with Australia and create the offense and set guys up and things like that. That's who I am as a player, and to do that is exciting.

I'm excited for the whole process, through camp, through the pre-Olympic games. We've got a tough schedule of games, so it's going to be good for us to test ourselves, good for me to test myself.

There's obviously a lot I want to get better at this summer. I'll spend all the pre-Olympics doing those things and living in the gym. Then I look forward to hitting the ground running in Paris and chasing a gold medal.

Q. What's top of mind for you as far as improvement?

JOSH GIDDEY: Shooting is the big one. That's obviously something I want to work on. Outside of that, there's a lot of things. I could rattle off ten right now. There's so much for my game that I want to evolve and get better at.

Yeah, I just -- just living in the gym is the big thing. Just being in there, repetitions, and then staying locked in and not getting distracted by things.

It's easy back home in Melbourne; there's a million things going on. But just living in the gym. I made a promise to myself to be in there as much as I can be. My house that I stay at is right by where I'm working out at. My trainers are all going to be there. Everything is kind of set up hopefully, and this is going to be the summer where I really have to lock in and improve the things I have to and to not let what happened in this series ever happen again.

Q. Josh, can you feel that this franchise is on the right path for achieving its goal?

JOSH GIDDEY: Definitely. From where we were two years ago, 23 wins or whatever it was, to where we are now, I think we're definitely on the right track. Whether we win a championship next year or in ten years, as long as we continue to stack good days, good weeks, good games, we're going to continue to trend in the right direction.

Every team wants to win. Everyone wants to win a championship. But as long as we continue to stack good days, build good habits, which we have in this building, we're going to continue on that path. Who knows whether it's next year, five years, ten years, whatever it is, we want to hit that goal eventually.

Q. A lot of your teammates have kind of seen their minutes fluctuate. They talk about how open Mark is and how much that helps them. What were the conversations like this week with you coming off the bench, and what was Mark like to help you prepare for that?

JOSH GIDDEY: He had spoken to me about that before the playoffs. He said, look, this can happen. He spoke to the team as well. Things can happen in the playoffs. Rotations can change. Guys that have played all year might fall out of the rotation and different things.

The first series, we swept the Pelicans. The next series, we started with the same unit. It was 2-2, and he felt it was necessary to make a change with Isaiah. As I said, it's obviously different. I've started every game in my career. To come off the bench was something new, but I just tried to drown out the fact that I wasn't going to start the game. Six minutes later, I'm going to be in there, so it doesn't change too much.

It was obviously a different perspective sitting there watching the tip, but as I said, I thought Sai was great. I thought the way he impacted that starting -- the four guys that had started all year was great, and he did an awesome job of coming in there and fitting in seamlessly.

As I said, I tried to be the best teammate that I could from that point on. Whether it was 5 minutes, 40 minutes, it didn't matter to me. I just wanted to be there for the guys and play my role as best I could.

Q. Going back to the Olympics, now that you've played deeper in the season, does that change your summer routine at all or development strategy at all?

JOSH GIDDEY: No, I'm straight back to it as soon as I get home. It's just a shorter period of straight workouts before the Olympic camp starts. No, it doesn't change anything for me; I'm straight back to it as soon as I get back.

Q. A lot of the mental aspect kind of gets forgotten, especially with you being young. How mentally taxing was the season? How would you get over that?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, this was probably the biggest challenge I've ever gone through, for a number of reasons obviously. I think mentally is the part that gets overlooked the most for any player. It's so easy for people to see what's happening on the floor but not see what happens behind the scenes.

There's so much more to a person than basketball. That's for anyone, not just me. I think you have a couple bad games, you get in your own head, maybe you lose confidence, whatever the case may be. For me, I just tried to stay within the team as much as I can this year, and that's been the thing for me that I found worked the best. When you come in every day, you get amongst the team, and you stay within the group. That's what cheers guys up, and that's what gets you back on the right path.

As I said, I'm really lucky to have good people around me that really care and really are there for you. There's definitely been days and stretches throughout this year that have been tough. That's no secret. I just tried to come in every day and do the best I could and be the best

teammate I could.

Q. Internally and emotionally, what would you say your lowest point was this season?

JOSH GIDDEY: There's been a lot. There's been days where you don't feel like getting out of bed for a number of reasons. As I said, I'm just lucky to have people around me that care, that were there for me.

Coming in every day seeing my teammates, that helps. Being in the gym working out, that definitely helps. Yeah, there's a million things. That's probably the few that helped the most with staying on track and drowning out outside noise.

Q. Mark mentioned how he wanted to practice tomorrow and wanted to be around you guys. What makes being around Mark so special?

JOSH GIDDEY: We all wanted that. We all wanted to win last night and be back here tomorrow to prepare for Game 7. It's part of the sport; you lose games, you win games. It's a tough pill to swallow at the end of the year because you want to move on, you want to keep playing.

Yeah, I think -- even when Mark says he wants to be in practice, I think it just speaks to how good of a group we've got. Players, coaching staff, we all love each other, and we all want to be around each other and practice and prepare for games, playing games, traveling, eating meals together, just doing everything.

I've said it a million times in this press conference, but just being around the guys is such a fun thing to do. It's almost like therapy. It's almost, you come in, you put a smile on your face. Irrespective of what happened, they check in on each other. I can't say enough about the team we have, and I love these guys to death.

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