

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Shai Gilgeous-Alexander Press Conference



Q. What are some personal goals of yours in training camp this season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Personal goals... I have a certain amount of reps I want to get, like, each day before practice, after practice. Especially this time, this is like we're bonding, making sure we're doing things together. Especially with our new additions, want to make sure we maintain and keep our camaraderie. Little things like that are on my mind right now.

Q. I know you've seen a lot of unique circumstances since you've been in the league, but this might be the first season that you've had this level of anticipation and expectations on the team you've been on. What is that like for you knowing what this team has from the general public and all the expectations?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It's sure fun. At the end of the day, we all are playing a game to win, win basketball games. The more you do so, the more fun you have playing it.

I think that's what kind of turned around for us last year. Not trying to replicate it. We're trying to be better. I think as long as we stay on course and we do what got us here, we'll be just fine.

I think we're more worried about that than the expectations or what we're supposed to be or not supposed to be. Just making sure we stay true to who we are in this process.

Q. I know you had your son in the season. How have you been able to enjoy that? How has fatherhood changed you?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It's been amazing. Yeah, it's changed my perspective on a lot of things. The things you think mattered don't really matter. Your life isn't yours anymore. But it's tough. It's tiring, but it's also the best thing ever.

Obviously a blessing to be able to have kids in itself, but

yeah, he's amazing for sure.

Q. What do you make of Hartenstein's game and how he fits in with you guys?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Very versatile. I think he has a little bit more than we've seen from his career so far, so I'm excited to see that unfold.

Obviously physical. Smart basketball player, play with it, play without it, screen, handoffs. I played with him in a Nike Hoop Summit. I was coming out of high school. He was probably playing pro. I don't know. I remember him being able to make a jumper, being very versatile obviously for his size. That fits right in with our identity as a group offensively.

Q. You said there might be more to his game. Like what are some of those areas to his game that you think can unlock here?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I think he's a better jump shooter than we've seen. I think he's got many -- he definitely will on offense, and we will encourage him to like we do the rest of our guys. I think that's mainly the areas.

Q. Defensively it looks like -- you guys were really good defensively last year. It looks like with the pieces you've added the chance to take the next step is possible. What do you think could be that next level for this defense? What areas do you feel like the additions could potentially (indiscernible)?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Half of defense is getting the rebounds and getting the ball. I think getting better in that area will for sure help us. Limiting teams taking second-chance points. But I think as long as we remain disruptive, remain physical, and try to keep teams uncomfortable and out of their comfort zone and where we want to be defensively, and I think our two additions, like you mentioned there, the guys that fit right in with that identity defensively. So it shouldn't be too much of a learning curve.

Q. Is it a challenge at all to blend great team defense with great individuals, or is that easy?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, very easy. It's

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very easy because defensively the better -- it's kind of the same with the whole game. The better you are individually, as long as you are all on the same page, which we are, it will click defensively for us. And it works on the other end of the ball too.

Q. What can Hartenstein bring to you as a screener?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Great screener. Physical screener. He's obviously a threat with his size. He has a float game to get in the pocket. He is smart above all. He knows how to read and make plays.

If I'm getting doubled, he can play in the pocket, make the next play. I think he's really versatile as a screener and can do multiple things.

Q. We talked about outside expectations, but looking at expectations within the league, I will guess that, first of all, you clearly made it, everybody knows who you are. This team was the No. 1 seed obviously, so won a lot of games. Does that change anything for you guys and for you? People know who you are now. You're not sneaking up on anybody. You're more of a target now versus a team that's on the rise.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: No, it doesn't change anything for us. Our biggest focus has been always day-to-day and trying to be better every day, trying to get better every day, be better than we were yesterday.

I think that's why we got to where we were last year, and I think us not changing that mentality and keeping that the same is in our best interest, and that's what we're going to continue to do.

Q. You still have a chip on your shoulder?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah.

Q. You were fighting for respect for years and years. Now everybody knows who you are.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It might have looked like that, but what we were fighting for is to get better every day. That's ultimately what it was. Yeah, it probably does look like that from the outside looking in.

Honestly, when we sucked as a basketball team, we weren't worried about the world is going to respect us. We were just, like, let's -- we're not where we want to be. Let's make sure that we get to where we want to be, and the only way to do that is to get better every day, and we did a good job of that.

Q. Obviously I know Josh was close with everybody. Now you bring in Alex. What were some of your first reactions to the move and for him to bring him in? What do you feel like he brings to the team?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Bittersweet for sure. Obviously two different players. Josh helped our team in amazing ways. Josh was my back court mate for quite some time too. Obviously his special vision and his passing and size will be missed. He will bring that to Chicago at a high level, obviously. He will flourish and be who he is supposed to be in this league given the opportunity, and I'm excited for that for him.

And then AC, we all know what he does. I think he's the only one on the team that's won, so he's going to bring that right away, he's going to bring that perspective, bring that juice, bring that knowledge.

Then what he does on both ends of the floor obviously is special defensively. Multiple awards because of it, and a very smart basketball player.

Like I said before, he's such a good player and a smart player. He's going to plug in any team. Fortunately it's our team.

Q. I just wanted to ask you, what do you see when he has guarded you in the past? What did you see in some of his skills and approach as far as super smart players, and how do you feel like he brings that to the team?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: He does his scout, so he knows what tendencies are. He knows what you want to do. Really good hands. He is smart, so he knows when to be physical, when not to be. Yeah, that's all I'm giving you guys because he's on my team now.

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