

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Chet Holmgren Press Conference



Q. Obviously you guys are coming off a good defensive season and added some pieces that may be good defensively as well. What is your early sense of Alex and Isaiah and what they will bring?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, just from playing against both of them, I have first-person experience on them being great defenders. They did really good things for their teams last year. They're going to do really good things for us this year. That's why we brought them in.

We believe in them as players. They're going to do just what everybody else is doing, which is completely buying into what we're trying to do as a team. A big part of that is defense. It's hard to win games, especially big games, especially playoff games, which we aspire to do if you can't play defense.

That's a big focus of what we're trying to do, and they're going to help us with that.

Q. Are there any specific slices of the defense that you feel like their skills will help specifically with? Turnovers, rebounding, whatever you think?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, if you look at their individual skill sets, what they brought to their teams last year isn't going to completely change this year. Alex is a great point-of-attack defender, pursuit defender, and action, ball screens, things like that. He has really active hands. Not only in passing lanes, but on the ball.

I think we can -- I don't think like to put expectations on -- I don't like expectations at all, but I think we'll see a lot of things similar to that this year.

Isaiah as well, he is a heck of a post defender, rebounder. He's a great rim protector. He was huge for that New York team last year, especially in the playoffs. He's going to be big-time this year.

Q. There's a belief that Isaiah will spell you a lot, but also that you will play together. Have you thought

about how the two of you will mesh on the court at the same time?

CHET HOLMGREN: It's definitely important to always try and visualize and see situations that you could be in before you are in them so you can prepare for them and practice for them. We haven't had a single team practice. We haven't had a single day of training camp. I know we're not close-minded on what we're going to do. Coach isn't. Nobody in the building is.

We have to get in there and figure out what is best for us as a team and what's going to work now and long-term for us. There's no decisions made on what we're going to do, how we're going to do it. That's going to be up to the coaching staff, and we're going to completely buy into that.

I feel like whatever decisions are made there, we're going to go out there and execute.

Q. (Indiscernible) there was also some conversations about getting you more involved as a playmaker. Sometimes it seems straightforward to improve to get more reps in (indiscernible)?

CHET HOLMGREN: I think there's a lot that goes into it. Part of it is reps. Sometimes we have to get it wrong to get it right, but you always want to get as far ahead of that as you can, and that comes with watching film and understanding rotations, spatial awareness, knowing where people are, and always having a willingness to make the right play because most of the time passing is the right play.

You have to be willing to make that early because of hesitation. Sometimes it means that that pass isn't there anymore. It's a combination of different things, but it comes with experience and hard work, which we're all trying to put in and get that outcome.

Q. There are things to be learned from both winning and losing, and you got to experience both those things in postseason last year. With that in the rearview mirror, how did that affect your postseason and your preparation this season both individually, like your game, what you want to work on, and as for other things you can add to the team's success?



CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah. Losing sucks. Nobody wants to lose. Losing hurts. We were definitely hurt when we lost last year. We didn't like that. It gives you valuable lessons if you allow it to.

When you win, a lot of times you can kind of gloss over mistakes that you have. We won the game, so we must have been doing everything right. You know what I'm saying? When you lose, it really opens your eyes to what you have to work on, and it also tells you what you have to work on because you lost for a reason.

If you were the better team, you would have won. It just told us what we had to work on going into the offseason. Not only myself, but all the players on our team as well as our coaching staff. Everybody was really accountable and able to look at themselves on what they could do better, and we are going to take that into this season and mesh it together as a team.

I think that will leave us in a better spot and a better team.

Q. Are you going to try to play all 82 games again?

CHET HOLMGREN: I honestly don't know how to answer that one. If I'm healthy and I'm kind of itching to get out there and play, but there's a million different factors throughout the season that you can't plan for. I didn't want it to be detrimental for myself or my team to go out and chase that. I felt at times last year I was definitely making some sacrifices to play in some games that I probably shouldn't have. Who knows? We'll see.

Q. You said you don't like expectations, but there's going to be a lot on you guys this season. What do you think going into the year when there is kind of a lot of pressure to win?

CHET HOLMGREN: There's always pressure to go out and win because we have amazing fans that spend their hard-earned money to come watch us play, and they're not coming to watch us play to go out there and put up duds or suck. So it's on us to really go out there and give it our all to try and win these games.

We're never going out there trying to lose. We're trying to win games. That's what makes it tricky because you have to be real careful with expectations. Especially when you attach them to outcomes. If you put expectations super high and you are just short of it, you might think that you weren't successful. If you put expectations super low and you are just above it, you might think you're really successful.

You have to be careful with expectations put on outcomes.

Around here we really emphasize putting expectations on processes, how we show up every day, how we go about our work, what we do, and the attention of detail that we do it to. That's what we're really focused on.

It's worked for me in the past to get better, to become a better player, better person. So, you know, my expectations are how I get better every day, how I show up, how I lead, and I think that will leave us in a good spot. I feel like everybody has a good understanding of that in our organization.

Q. It seemed like you were here for a longer stretch of time this summer. Why did you make that a priority?

CHET HOLMGREN: I love OKC.

Q. As far as offseason work (indiscernible). How intentional are you about who you are in the gym with?

CHET HOLMGREN: Part of that's tough because NBA players are notoriously bad with scheduling, so it's like be here at 10:00, and they're not there until 11:00, or some people are, like, oh, I can't make it today at 10:00. It's kind of tough.

Especially in the summer, I'm just trying to play. I'm definitely hunting some of them runs. Sometimes it's getting out there with whoever you can get out there with and making the most out of it. That's what I try to do.

Q. You talked about accountability. What have you seen as far as Shai grasping accountability and trying to take accountability whether that's in May or preparing here?

CHET HOLMGREN: You see it in a lot of different ways. You see it in the way he works. He understands he's a big part of what we do and making what we do go. You see that every day when he comes in and works hard and does everything right by the textbook, and even being on -- there's accountability by action, and there's accountability by word, I guess.

He says all the right things, not just to say the right things, because he really means it. He's been a great leader for us so far, and he's going to continue to do that going forward.

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