

# Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

Wednesday, May 21, 2025  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

## Shai Gilgeous-Alexander Kia NBA MVP Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Today I have the distinct honor of serving as your emcee for truly a historic occasion, and first things first, I would like to welcome up your 2024-25 Kia NBA Most Valuable Player, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

(Applause.)

We want to officially welcome everyone to the Thunder ION powered by OU Health. This is where the work happens. This is where the foundation of this team is laid, and earlier today was also the site of a very unforgettable moment when Shai was named the MVP of this season, a truly, truly deserving honor, and we'll hear from Shai momentarily.

But first I want to take some time to acknowledge some very special people in the room with us today. First things first, Shai's family is here, his wife Hailey, his adorable son Aries, and also his brother Thomas.

We'd also like to welcome in Thunder leadership with us, as well, Thunder chairman Clay Bennett. We also have Thunder executive vice president and general manager Sam Presti, Thunder head coach Mark Daigneault and also the Thunder basketball operations staff here, as well.

Speaking of the Thunder, how about Shai's teammates. The entire Thunder squad is on stage with us right now. We'd also like to extend a very warm welcome to the media members in attendance with us today who are here in town covering these Western Conference Finals between the Thunder and the Timberwolves. Thank you so much for being here.

We have some special guests in attendance today, some community members who are here representing some organizations locally that are very close to Shai's heart. We want to shout out Cheri Weaver, executive director of Wings; Gregory McPherson, founder of Poetry and Chill; Trent Riley, executive director of Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center; Tina Belcik, president and CEO of Boys and Girls Club of Oklahoma County; and Allyson Meyer, deputy director of Cleats for Kids. Thank you all so much for being

here. It's an honor to have you.

What a historic moment we all get to witness here today, and truly what an exemplary and one-of-a-kind season that we witnessed from Shai Gilgeous-Alexander this year, and if you'll indulge me, I want to take a moment to really reflect and put into perspective the MVP-level season that we saw from SGA this year.

In 72 games this season, Shai averaged a league-best 32.7 points per game, winning his first ever scoring title. Shai joined Michael Jordan as the only two players in NBA history to average 30 points while shooting 50 percent from the field while also racking up five assists, five rebounds and also one and a half steals and one block.

If we're going to talk about putting his name into exclusive lists of great players, let's talk about the fact that this is now Shai's third consecutive season averaging 30 points on 50 percent shooting. That list of players is now Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Michael Jordan, Giannis Antetokounmpo, and Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

Shai was also named to his third straight All-Star team this season, his second year as an All-Star starter. And this is my favorite stat, to really illustrate the dominance of his scoring this season, Shai scored a total of 2,484 points this year. That leads the NBA, obviously. 2,099 of those points were scored through three quarters of play, which would still rank second in the NBA in scoring.

This award recognizes the totality of these accomplishments, but it was also earned through relentless work and a commitment to continuous and consistent growth. This is a man who I have followed for six years and who has said time and time again that his focus is on the process of improving and daily dedication to developing as a player and just letting the chips fall where they may.

Well, today those chips have fallen, and the results of that process are crystal clear, and Shai has officially and permanently etched his name alongside the greatest players to ever play in this league.

Without further ado, I introduce to you, your 2024-25 Kia NBA Most Valuable Player, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

(Applause.)



... when all is said, we're done.®

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I would like to start this whole, I guess, speech with just thanking my teammates. I can't say enough how much you guys mean to me, and not only as like a basketball player but, like, as family. I know you guys know, we do everything together, on and off the court. We go shopping, we eat. You guys are really like my brothers, and I really mean that, and without you guys, none of this would be possible, and I want you guys to know this award is your award, too, so thank you guys so much.

Then I would like to go to the organization from top to bottom, Clay, Sam, Coach, Donny, to the equipment guys to the weight room guys. You guys do an amazing job of allowing us as players to just enjoy basketball, and I don't think that gets enough credit. We come in here, everything is laid out, all we have to do is play basketball and have fun and be kids, and I think that's why we've been able to grow the way we have, and thank you guys for that.

Then my people from back home. I have a crew in the summer, Mark, Devanté, Vince, Maurice, Sunday, guys that I grew up with. They've worked tremendous hours with me in the summertime to help me get to this point, and without them I would not be the player I am today.

There's Nate Mitchell who helps me in the summertimes, Nem in the summertimes. Without you guys and the rigorous training schedule and the dedication to my craft that you guys don't get to be a part of, I wouldn't be the player I am today, as well. So thank you guys for that.

I also would like to thank my brother, my twin, my best friend since I was two years old, since he came out of the womb. Thank you for everything. My partner in crime through it all.

My dad for putting the ball in my hands, my mother. If any of you guys know my mother, she's crazy, and I told her the other day that I always thought she was insane until I had a child, then I understood exactly what she was saying and exactly what she meant.

I loved the person that she's turned me and my brother into. She is a big part of that.

Then the one and only Hailey Summers. Sorry, I'm so dramatic. Hailey Summers, thank you for everything you are for me, for our son Aries. You were the first person to show me that love really meant. What love really meant, what sacrifice really meant. I can't wait to spend the rest of this journey called life with you. So thank you for everything. I wouldn't be the man I am, I wouldn't be the player I am, I wouldn't be the father I am without you, so

thank you for that.

Thank you, everybody.

One more thing. I got caught up in crying and I forgot to mention my management crew. You guys have changed my life from the moment you stepped into it and helped me really just go after what I want in life, and without you guys, the last couple years is no fluke. It's been as smooth as it is because of you guys, and thank you for that.

All right, go ahead.

**Q. Wanted to ask you, I know you've mentioned Steve Nash in the past. I want to know what this means to you as a Canadian, what that means to you in terms of now becoming that person that other people are going to look up to in your country?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it's amazing. He set the foundation. He was the first Canadian basketball player I knew of, and without seeing guys go to the NBA from Canada, it wouldn't have been as much of a dream as it was for us as kids growing up.

To be in the conversation with a guy like that and what he's meant to not only basketball but to the country of Canada has been special.

**Q. Shai, at what point in your career did you feel that you could play at an MVP level?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I'm not too sure. I always thought that I could be a really good player because I had seen what just putting your head down and working and controlling what you can control can do for you, and I made tremendous strides. But I never -- I guess once the conversation started a couple years ago. But I never, like, thought this was going to happen. I dreamt about it as a kid, but you know as a kid it's a fake dream. But as the days go on and you realize that you get closer to your dream, it's hard to not freak out. It's hard to not be a six-year-old kid again, and I think that's what's allowed me to achieve it. I try to not focus on it and just worry about what's got me to this place, which is just working hard and taking it day by day and trusting the people around me and trusting the things that I've done to get me to this place.

**Q. Shai, thinking back to the early days, with the Thunder, what are some of the things that they did to kind of lay a foundation for you to be able to achieve something like this?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, so the first thing I



noticed, I got traded, it was Summer League and I flew here for physicals, and that night I was in the gym shooting, and when I got in the gym, I realized that all the balls were lined up and you could see the Wilsons. Then I realized, like, the organization and the Gatorades and the towels. That kind of just, like -- I just took a step back and just, like, hmm, this is interesting, I've never seen this before.

Then as I went through my career here so far, I understood, like, the meaning of it. At first it was just, like, oh, someone has OCD. Someone is crazy in the building. But I understand the organization. I understand the particularness in just making sure everything is right so all you have to do is worry about putting the ball in the hoop or boxing out or rebounding or getting a stop. That's what's allowed guys to come here and grow.

It's no fluke; it's for a reason, and they do a great job of that.

**Q. When you hear the news, obviously this is a long journey for you, only you truly know what it took, what are the moments that flash in your mind when you hear that you won MVP?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: All the moments I got, like, cut, traded, slighted, overlooked. But also all the joy, all the things that my family has comforted me in, all the life lessons. Everything that's turned me into the man and the human being that I am today.

I don't think it's enough emphasis on how much off the court influences on the court, and once I became better off the court, my career started to skyrocket, and it's no coincidence.

**Q. Talk about the watches you got your boys, where the idea came from. I don't know if they chose what they got. And also you got your family here, your wife, obviously. You're not a diva. Maybe with clothes you're a diva --**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: With the clothes for sure.

**Q. As a person, what has kept your humility?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yes, so the watches, I think it was last season, we were like just on the bus being silly, like we always are, and I can't remember who it was, but obviously I was in MVP talks. Somebody brought up, like, a gift or something -- it was J-Will? Yeah, of course it's J-Will. He was like, 2, what are you going to get us when you win MVP? It's a crazy question to ask. But I don't know what brought it up, but watches was in the

conversation. A lot of guys on the team like watches. Who doesn't like watches?

Then I said yes, which was also silly on my part, but I said yes, and then as I got closer to achieving the goal, I was like, wait a second, I actually have to do what I said I was going to do, so I made it happen.

But this is nothing compared to what they've been to me. I would rather have the MVP over a Rolex every day of the week, and without them I wouldn't have the MVP, so this is in the slightest what they deserve.

The second one, what was it again? Humility, correct.

My family for sure. They don't ever let whatever is going on around get to my head or, I guess, gas me up. They're always honest with me, open with me. They don't ever waver, no matter what. No matter what adjust achieved, no matter what I didn't achieve. They're the same people when I walk through the door, and that's been inspiring for me. That's showed me not only, like, who they are as humans but the balance that you have to have in life to take steps forward and succeed. They've helped me in tremendous ways.

**Q. Shai, as you became an All-Star, all-NBA player, you always made it clear you weren't trying to chase or become Russell Westbrook or Kevin Durant, but those are going to be natural comparisons now that you're the third Thunder player to win MVP. What's it like being in that group with those guys?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it's amazing. Any conversation when it's particularly those two guys, but guys who get this award, is hard to even wrap your head around. Those guys have done amazing things with the game, changed the game in ways you couldn't see coming. To even be in the same breath, like I said, it's hard to even put into words.

I can't chalk it up to anything else besides just like a kid dreaming and working at it and seeing where it takes you. That's the biggest thing. I know Kevin and I know Russell. I know the kids they were, and they just dreamed and worked hard and got to this position, and so did I.

**Q. Can you just talk about the up-and-down roller coaster of a journey that it's been getting to this point, coming here, being a playoff team, to winning 22 games with nobody in the arena to 68 with a franchise record, just sticking with the journey to get to this point?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yes. Every time

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

something doesn't go my way in basketball, and in life, I guess, I revert back to this book, and it's a karate book that I received from a friend. The message in the book was basically that success isn't linear, so it's never, like, just like this. It's always up and down and you dip three to go up four and then you'll dip again to go up six. Before you look at it, you're up ten.

That's how I always -- once I read that book, that's how I always looked at it. If we were in a drought or if we were in a three-game losing streak or a 17-game losing streak at one point, there was always a light at the end of the tunnel if you do the right things and you trust the work and you stick with it, and I guess we're all seeing that today.

**Q. Along those same lines, for you personally, you talked about being cut, traded, slighted, overlooked. Can you take us back to what those moments have been like for you, and then with that in perspective, describe what the journey has been like for you personally to get to this point, NBA MVP?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. I used all those moments as motivation. My mom did a really good job of making sure me and my brother never made excuses as kids. It was never anyone else's fault, it was always our fault and what we can control, and that's helped me in my mindset and helped me attack those situations and come out on the better end of them.

Sorry, what was the second part of your question?

**Q. Just having gone through all those low points, can you describe what the journey has been like for you personally to get to this point, to league MVP, something you said you never really thought about?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yes, it's been a roller coaster. I had nights where I thought I wasn't good at basketball, had nights where I thought I was the best player in the world before I was. It's been ups and downs. My mentality to try to stay level through it all really helped me. Once I figured that out, I really saw jumps in my game.

**Q. Shai, you've gone from 11th pick in the draft to multiple All-Star Games, all-NBA a couple times, probably be for the third time in a row this year, now MVP. What's left for you on the basketball court?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: The way I see it, everything is left. When I picked up a basketball when I was nine years old, playing AAU, I never sat there like, I want to be an All-Star, I want to be an MVP. I sat there like I want to win this tournament.

Winning is everything. If you don't win, none of it matters. That's just how I see the game. That's how I see competition in general. Like you play, whether it's pick-up with your friends, whether it's men's league and you're 55, whether it's novice basketball and you're nine years old. You pick up the ball to play and win.

That's what I'm after, winning as many times as I possibly can.

**Q. There's kind of three things on the same trajectory, your personal game and success, the team's record, 68 wins, and every guy up here is a better player now than they were at the beginning of the season. How have you been able to chart that all at the same time, to have all those three things on the same trajectory this year?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: As a group, we prioritize the right things. We prioritize winning. We prioritize getting better. We prioritize each other's success.

Doing so has -- like we've just focused on those things every day. Every day we come in, how can we get better, individually and as a group. Every day it's a learning process. Every day it's what can we do to win the next day, win the next practice, win the next game. When you take that mentality, you get really good at it, and you look up and you've strung some wins and you've strung some days in a row of you getting better and you're a better player and you're a better team at the end of the tunnel.

That mentality has completely changed this group, and it's not a coincidence. It's the guys in the room. It's the character of the guys in the room. They know what it takes, and they prioritize it.

**Q. Shai, you talked earlier in the year about getting cut from your JV team in ninth grade. It happens to a lot of kids, kills a lot of passion. Can you give a message to those kids that may not be where they need to be right now in ninth or tenth grade?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. One thing I would say is the only way your dream 100 percent does not come true is if you don't try and you give up. That's the only way that I promise you, you won't achieve it if you give up. The last thing you should do is give up and stop trying.

Now, if you're going to try it, make sure you try really hard and give it your 100 percent, but don't ever give up for sure.

**Q. You've played for a lot of great coaches, but is**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**there anything unique about Mark that's gotten you better and gotten you to this place?**

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yes. Mark is -- I'm going to be nice. Mark is insane. Now, he's insane in the best way possible. He is so annoying with how particular he is with, like, little things. He's so -- I'm trying to find the words. He's so focused on the things that matter, and he does not let those slip no matter what. And it doesn't matter if it's raining outside, sunny outside, I just had 100 points, if I just had two points. He holds me to a standard that never wavers, and that mentality has helped me not only in my game and as a basketball player but as a leader for sure.

I now know what it takes to, like, lead the right way. He's helped me in tremendous ways with that. That's helped me become a better player for sure. Thanks, Coach.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everybody. Thank you, Shai. Once again, we want to thank you all so much for being out here today. One quick note, because this announcement was literally made today, the Michael Jordan trophy is still en route to Oklahoma City, so Shai will officially be presented with the trophy before Game 2 tomorrow on the court tomorrow evening. Once again, thank you all so much for coming out here today, and one more time for your 2024-25 Kia NBA Most Valuable Player, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports