

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Sam Presti

Thomas Sorber

Brooks Barnhizer

Press Conference



this is their day. It's the beginning of their professional careers. They have so much in front of them, and we're thrilled and excited that they're starting with us, and we're excited to see where they head within our organization and also within our team.

With that, we'd open it up to any questions that you may have.

Q. Did you guys watch the NBA Finals, and what did it feel like to be selected by the Thunder just a couple days after?

THOMAS SORBER: Yeah, I watched the NBA Finals. Honestly, it just felt good to be chosen by Sam and just to be able to bring whatever I could do to bring to the team.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, as well, of course I watched the NBA Finals, and I think something that me and Thomas, we were talking about earlier, how physical that series was and the kind of kids that we are and things that we're able to bring into that culture is just really exciting. Definitely thrilled to end up in this position for sure.

Q. For both of you guys, what was you guys' first reaction getting off the plane here? I'm not sure if you went through the process of getting a tour or anything, but what are your first impressions of the organization since you guys have been here?

THOMAS SORBER: Well, I've been here a couple times, and it still amazes me every time I step foot into the gym. Just to be welcomed, I just feel honored just to be here.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: I feel the same way. I think my first kind of feel of it was just the community feel and the people. I felt welcomed, and I know how much this team means to the community, and for us to be a part of it is so exciting.

Q. For Sam, what was it about these two guys that made them the perfect pick for the franchise?

SAM PRESTI: As I said earlier, just the way they approach the game, physicality, team orientation. I was fortunate enough to see Thomas practice pretty early in the season, and was really impressed with just how he operated inside

THE MODERATOR: Let's welcome to the stage our 2025 draft class for the Oklahoma City Thunder. We've got Thomas Sorber, Brooks Barnhizer, and accompanying them is Thunder executive vice president and general manager Sam Presti.

(Applause.)

Sam will open up with a few comments and then we will take questions.

SAM PRESTI: An exciting day for everybody. Glad everyone could be here to join us.

Before I introduce these gentlemen, I just want to take a second because I hadn't had the chance to do this the other night, just recognizing the work of our scouting staff and all the people involved in the draft process that do this work year-round that culminates in a day like this. We're very fortunate to have such a great group of people working with the Thunder for many years.

Today is a great day. We want to welcome the Sorbers and the Barnhizers to Oklahoma City and to the Thunder organization. These are special moments for families, for friends, for coaches and mentors, so many people that have contributed and poured into these two young men to have a day like today. In our organization we have a saying that we draft people, we develop professionals, and we explore our potential together.

These two people are next up in that experience. They both represent the type of things that we're constantly striving to add to our organization. One, they bring positive energy to the environments that they're in. They're defensive-minded players. They're physical players. They have team orientation.

Because of that, that's why they're sitting here today. Now,



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the team, given his age and the fact that he was a first-year player, was mature in terms of how he handled himself with his teammates. His work was extremely concentrated and focused.

Brooks is somebody -- and I've told this to him. I was actually at a game watching another player last year, and had no idea who he was, honestly, and then within the game, I found myself watching him more than the person I was supposed to be there watching. We kind of put his name down and made sure that we kept tabs on him from that point on, and we're very fortunate to have him in the program.

Same thing as Thomas, just hard playing, physical, and the team orientation of these young men is to me one of the most important things and I think one of the things that will make their assimilation here pretty smooth.

Q. There's two aspects of Thunder culture that are maybe of interest of people. One of them is the fun aspect, kind of the stuff they do post-game, messing around with Nick and the dances and the different things that they do, but then the other thing is the seriousness for such a young team, two very different aspects that somehow come together. Can you tell me your thoughts on both of those and what you've seen of them?

BROOKS BARNHIZER: I think it's a really good question, really good point, and it's been something really cool to just kind of look at. You kind of just see how together this group is, and also, from just talking to the people here the first couple days, they know when to turn it on and turn it off, and that's the really cool thing, that being one of the youngest teams in the NBA to win an NBA championship, there's just no better fit for guys like me and Thomas to come in and try to add whatever we can and just stack days, day by day, and try to join that and kind of just immerse ourselves in that environment, and we can't wait for that.

THOMAS SORBER: Yeah, I'm going to piggyback off what he said. Those guys are a great group of guys. They know when to turn it off and turn it back on every time they step on to that floor. Me and Brooks are just trying to be a part of that group and give all that we've got.

Q. Sam, you mentioned getting to watch Thomas practice. He was quoted as talking about being really excited about sitting down and guarding. I wondered what you noticed from a competitiveness standpoint and maybe that mentality that he's going to bring?

SAM PRESTI: Yeah, same thing. Young players don't

usually play that physical. I think also the other thing with Thomas is just how quickly he's processing the game on both ends of the floor, which is another trait that was really attractive to us. You could see that both in games and in practice both.

As I said earlier, the ability to understand what the team needs and to give yourself up for that at a young age, I thought that was also pretty impressive, and then the more people you speak to, that was a pretty consistent theme even when he was an extremely young player in high school.

We're excited to see kind of how that manifests. I don't think there could be better guys for him to walk into the gym with than Hart and J-Will and some other guys he'll be spending a lot of time with, and I think he'll do great with them.

Q. Sam, with as deep and talented as this roster is, how, if at all, has your draft strategy maybe changed between best available versus how these two guys specifically fit on the roster?

SAM PRESTI: Yeah, I mean, that's a good question. The one thing I'd say is we're always -- we're never rigid in anything we do, so we don't say this is the way we've done it so we're always going to do it this way. We're always looking to update the way we look at things, try to figure out as much as we can learn. Every draft that we have is an opportunity to reflect back on the others and figure out what we can do better.

But the one thing we've never really strayed from, and I don't think we will, is the focus on drafting people and not players. I think the characteristics of winning players, they multiply at a greater level than just talented players. They scale up better.

I think for us, when you're adding people that you believe in and that have the same traits as the people that are helping to drive a lot of your interval growth, you have a chance to get compounding results from that, and that's what drew us so these individuals.

Q. Thomas and Brooks, going into the situation where the team just won the NBA Championship, do you have a little pressure on you just knowing that you're going into a gym full of champions, or is there a little pressure taken off because you kind of know that these guys have been to the mountaintop and you're ready to play with these guys?

THOMAS SORBER: I want to say there's no pressure. I'll say just having the mentality just to come in and try to do



what those guys do, just come in, play hard and give exactly what I have and just try and catch up with those guys and see what I can learn from the older guys.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, I would say to piggyback off of that, just being a part of a team that just won a championship, you have top-tier coaches, top-tier resources in general from the front office down, and like Thomas said, we're just trying to add to that every day in any way we can and in any way we're told. I feel like pressure itself is a privilege. We're in a great spot. But we've just got to take advantage of it and attack it every day.

Q. For the players, what were your first impressions of each other as people and as future teammates?

THOMAS SORBER: Well, I seen Brooks yesterday in the hotel. He came down in the hotel lobby. I just went up to him and introduced myself, and he just gave me great energy back. I felt like it was going to be a good first year, just for both of us.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, it's funny, we met in the lobby yesterday, and we're definitely a little different. I was like, how old are you. He's like, I'm 19. I'm like, I'm 23. We just kind of -- it was just a funny moment. Definitely gelled really well, and I can't wait to get on the court with him.

Q. Have either of you guys had a chance to talk to any of the other players on the team, and is there anyone specific that you're looking forward to being mentored by on the roster?

THOMAS SORBER: Yeah, a couple of the players texted me on draft night after I got drafted just congratulating me and just being excited, can't wait to work with me. I was just giving them the same energy back. Yeah, just can't wait to work with them and see them in person.

BROOKS BARNHIZER: Yeah, I haven't talked to any yet, but a couple of guys that come to mind for me. All of them in general, but just Caruso and Dort, guys like that that are are kind of similar to my path. If I'm able to be cut from that same cloth one day, that would be amazing, but can't wait to get in the gym with those guys, as well.

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