

Oklahoma City Thunder

Media Conference

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Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Press Conference



Q. Shai, you've (indiscernible) played this late last season into June. How did it affect your offseason in terms of rest, working on your game, that kind of stuff? Again, (indiscernible).

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. It was good. Like you said, it was a little bit shorter than it has been in the past. I prefer it that way, you ask me yeah.

I just managed my time, took some time off that I think was needed, and then was ready to get back to work when it was time. And also spent time with my family and friends and kind of decompressed from everything the NBA season entails. It was good. Just a little bit more precise in my time management and my days managing.

Q. I imagine that once you get to the level that you're at, it's the little things that kind of separate you from the other great players in the league. How much do you take pride in that behind-the-scenes work in the offseason?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I mean, it's made me -- I was never a player that jumped at the gym or had any insane talents. I had to work for it. I had to craft and carve and mold myself into this player that I am today. And I'll never forget that. And because of that, I hold that very dearly and make sure if I'm doing anything, I'm working at my game and try to be better.

And it goes for everything in life, for sure, to get better at something. But I've had no choice in my career, to hang my hat on hard work.

Q. You mentioned or can you kind of speak to the development of your relationship with Dem (phonetic) in the offseasons and how much of a benefit it is to have someone back home that you can work with when you're there?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. We've started working together I think since the end of my rookie year in the NBA. And before that just like learn as you go and

don't really -- like, back then I didn't even really understand what lifting and working out really meant. I thought it was just to get strong.

But, yeah, we've both grown through the whole relationship, personally and in our professions. And to this day we're super close because of that. He's been tremendous in this. He's had a hand in this success as much as anybody. I like to say without him and the work that he does, my body isn't where it is today. And then if your body isn't where it is, you can't go out there and perform. So he has a big hand in this, and he knows that. Nothing new.

But, yeah, it makes it a lot easier as well. I like to be home in the summertime, and he's from where I'm from. So it's perfect.

Q. So what do you think of the post-All-Star format with international players versus USA? They're talking about having a team of eight international players and two teams of eight U.S. players and playing each other in a tournament.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Um, I don't know. I don't know. It could be fun. Before I give my opinion, I like to make sure that I get the opportunity to play in the game. And then from there I'll I guess give my opinion.

Q. If you did have some control over the format, how would you do it?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I don't know. I honestly don't know. The way I see it is they're after guys competing a little bit more. And I'm not too sure if the format is the reason why guys aren't competing. Guys that make it are grown man and they're going to compete if they want or not compete if they don't want to. And I think that's what it's going to come down to.

So the change in the format, it's good, it's fun. It keeps the fans engaged. It could be interesting. It's what the league is supposed to do. They do a great job of that. But I think it's just going to come down to if the players want to play or not.

Q. Shai, the highs have obviously been high for Chet, but he's had some injuries kind of delay his

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development. Are there still levels you think he can reach or that you've seen from him that you think he could obtain this year?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. I think everyone in the world that watches basketball can see that Chet isn't even a fraction of the player he's going to be. He's missed so many games. And on the biggest stage and the biggest game of basketball possible, he has, I think, it was, like, five or whatever blocks and completely changes the game.

He's the kind of guy that just -- Chet's the kind of -- he's made to play basketball and he's made to be successful in basketball, from his height to his instincts to his feel. And he's just going to continue to grow, because he has a mentality that sets him apart.

So on top of all the things that are God-given and you can't teach, he has work ethic and he's driven and he wants way more for himself.

So the universe, people in the universe have no choice but to watch Chet Holmgren grow into the player that he's going to be.

Q. We all see the defensive end. And you mentioned what he did in the Finals. What areas offensively do you think he can take a step in?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I honestly think for a guy like him, the world is his oyster. Like, he can do whatever he wants -- check and shoot, check and put it down on the floor, check and post up a small, check and drive by a big. I think it's just about him tightening those skills and figuring out where in the game, when in the game and how in the game.

And that's a little bit on the team and guys like myself as well to make sure he's getting those opportunities in the live play, in the games, to craft those skills. It's a little bit harder, like, a guy like myself I got to craft my skills while we were, you guys could say, "rebuilding" and not as competitive. So it's more like trial and error.

He has less room to wiggle, but I'm sure he'll figure it out. And it's on myself to make sure that he gets those opportunities and gets some reps and some run and help him figure out that process.

Q. After the Finals we didn't get to talk to you before we knew the full extent of Dub's injury. I just want to ask you, can you put into context what he was going through when we watched him gut it out throughout the playoffs, getting 40 in the Finals and beyond that?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Dub is a warrior. He just did whatever it took. And he's been that all year. He's been that since he got here. He's been that for us. He's been like a Swiss Army knife and just does whatever. We have no bigs, he plays the five. Has a broken wrist, he has 40 in the finals.

Like, he just -- he's a competitor at his heart. And like when that kicks in, it takes over. And he's a winner because of it. So it's impressive what he's done. I'm not surprised, though. He's a big-time talent, big-time competitor, big-time personality. And he's stepped into those moments because of it.

Q. Dub mentioned you guys aren't defending (indiscernible). It's how you're on the offensive. I'm sure it's easy to say you want to wipe the slate clean, but how much as a competitor do you enjoy being the top dog with the target on your back?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It's what you strive for. We've all achieved something that we've dreamed about since we were kids. We've had plenty of time to relish and think about it and have fun, and I guess you can kind of say just soak in it. I know I have.

But, yeah, like Dub said, it would suck to lose the NBA Championship in 2026. So that's the new focus. That's the new goal. And how we get there is the same as it's always ever been -- daily improvement and focusing on trying to get better at the things that we can control every day. And hopefully we look up and we've accomplished the same thing we just accomplished.

Q. Shai, we saw you bring the trophy back home in front of your hometown of Hamilton, show it off in front of thousands of people. What was that experience like? What was just the experience like of going through the NBA offseason with showing off all your trophies and everything that you've accomplished in the last year? Specifically how was it like to do that in your hometown?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It's surreal. Like seeing a lot of people I grew up around, seeing a lot of places I grew up playing and going to school and the library I used to go to as a kid, like, just seeing those communities and those people and giving them a chance to, I guess, celebrate and feel kind of what I felt was very special.

I couldn't imagine as a kid (indiscernible) and coming to Hamilton. So I kind of like tried to flip perspective and think about it that way.

But, yeah, it was special, and I'm glad that the city and the



fans got to kind of enjoy that moment a little bit as I have.
They deserve it and they've been great.

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