

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Shai Gilgeous-Alexander Press Conference



Q. Thinking back to the beginning of the season and all the things that you guys had with the injuries at some point, how did you guys manage to get better during the season and to put yourselves in position to compete to go to the finals? What do you think you got better at?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: We never made excuses, first and foremost. We never used that as a crutch. It's something you have to draw from, something every team goes through. Maybe not on the same level, but (indiscernible). Nothing else we can do besides just go out there and compete and still play the same brand of basketball. (Regarding talented guys.)

Q. (Indiscernible.)

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, we just -- we weren't who we were regardless of guys being out. We still had guys who wanted to play basketball at the highest level.

Q. You set the bar for what you want in this league pretty high. How do you measure a season in which you fell short of missing The Finals?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I mean, like it was a failure. Like I failed at my goal. I didn't achieve what I wanted to achieve.

But through my experiences I learned the most from myself, and it makes me have the greatest increases of my career when I fail my goal and don't get what I want, and I look at this no different.

I didn't get where I wanted to go this season. There's a reason for that. Now I have to look at that reason and try to make sure it never happens again.

Q. Can you describe just the difficulties that they created for you all defensively, particularly with the way they guard?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, they're obviously a really good defense. (Indiscernible) background, I know everything else is funnel everything to him, creating a lot of space, which is pretty unique. A lot of guys can't do that.

It's a really good defense, but it's not impossible to score. I just think it's very different. It's very different from every other team. So it's like it takes some getting used to and it takes some adjusting to.

Yeah, they're a really good defense.

Q. You were asked last night about any involvement you might have in off-season contracts, that sort of thing. Is that leaving that up to Sam entirely? It's not what we normally hear. We always hear from star players. Why is that your mindset, and why are you maybe a little bit different in that thinking?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I don't have the time or energy to do Sam's job in my everyday life. Basketball takes up a lot. And then -- I mean, you can't wear every hat in every relationship. I can't go home and be the wife of the house and the kid of the house. I just can't do that. I've got to wear my dad hat.

It's the same thing when I come to work. Like I wear the Shai hat and Sam wears the Sam hat, Mark wears the Mark hat, and Chet wears the Chet hat. We all do our part to make our family in the building whole and running on all cylinders. That's how we've operated, and that's how we're going to continue.

Q. Development has been a big thing since you got here in the way it's built and the players you've acquired on the roster. You guys started as a team that's a championship contender. How has development changed? What does development look like from back then to today for you guys?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I'm not sure it changes much. I think it's more so like the more experiences you have under your belt, the more like -- the more opportunity you get to learn and challenge yourself and essentially develop.

Every player, every team, whether they win or lose, goes into the summer like we need to do this so I can be a better



player, better team next season. That's what we have done and through years of success and why we continue to grow as a group.

Q. What did the season show you you need to get better at?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I don't know. I haven't had enough time to think about it.

Q. Does your off-season change this year compared to last year, winning the championship, coming close?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I have a few more weeks of time on my hands, but that's about it. Nothing else really changes. Regardless, I'll watch the games that I struggled in, why I struggled, and figure out what to do better just like I did last year.

Q. You need to figure out ways to get better. Obviously there's people that will help you with this. Out of your personal group, how have they helped you through that process getting better in the off-season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Those guys are amazing. Obviously they're really good at their jobs. I think the best part about it is they care. That's why this team is able to evolve and grow. I just think that we all share the same love for improvement in the sport of basketball.

Yeah, we're all on the same page and alignment. (Indiscernible.)

Q. You were asked about the Spurs, a team you need to face. Are you going to watch that series specifically for what you need to work on with that team, or is it bigger picture for you guys?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it's bigger picture, but, I mean, it's no secret the team had success. Yeah, a lot of it was (indiscernible) we'll watch those games to figure out how to improve.

Q. A player and coach being together as long as you and Mark have, it's really hard to get Mark to talk about himself and his thought on how he coaches. Can you go through your relationship with Mark, and what does he do well as a coach?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I think like with Mark he's like at the core of all of it, just a really good guy. I think when you can connect with somebody, it makes everything else easier, like it makes his job, my job easier to work with each other because we have a deeper connection. We

talk all the time.

Like I also know like what he values in his life and he knows what I value in my life. He knows who I am, and I think it gives you a better outlook on decisions with teammates, and I think he's done a really good job which even though he's young, he's a super achieving coach in the NBA. He's been just a really good human being for a group of guys to follow.

And I think as a coach like, (indiscernible) like Coach really just cares about competing in basketball and winning, and that's all he cares about. He actually does not care about how people see him, his accolades, what he achieves besides winning.

I think that's it, everything that's unnecessary is cut out. It's almost like he has no like personal ambition. All he wants is for this group to win.

When you're coached by a guy like that, you have no choice but to trust him and what he thinks is right because like his intentions are so about everyone else and not his. That's something that's rare to come across in life. Not even just in basketball, but for a co-worker to only care about everyone else outside yourself, you know what I mean?

Life doesn't really work like that. He's a special guy. He's a special guy above a special coach. Being able to play for a guy like that, I'm lucky.

Q. What does that process look like for you, somebody that's so accomplished?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I watch film, we'll watch film. We'll go through what it looks like skill-wise, and obviously I work my butt off to just get better at those things.

Then besides that, it's just like take care of my body, make sure like I'm stronger. I don't think it's anything secret. It's the same.

Q. Jalen and Chet, two and three in the pecking order. How detrimental was it this season on to not have Jalen? And with Chet, he had kind of a physical series. How much more, particularly on the offensive end, do you all need him?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Not having Dub for the whole year sucked. He's just such a unicorn out there. He's a 20-point per game scorer, guards 1 through 5. Last season he got all NBA for offense, all NBA for defense, and was an All-Star at maybe 24 years old.

advise Chet. He'll figure it out.

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So losing a guy like that just hurts. He's just uber talented. Having that on the court 24/7 is just a luxury, and we just didn't have that luxury this year. Sometimes it just goes like that.

And Chet, like we need Chet. We just need Chet Holmgren. Before Chet was here, we weren't who we are today. We couldn't have the success we have today. When he's the best version of himself, we're the best version of ourselves, and it's no secret. Yeah, we need Chet. He's another guy that got all offense, defense, and All-Star. Guys like that, you need on your team.

Both those guys are the same caliber. We need them to be the best version of themselves for us to be the best version of ourselves. And I have confidence that they will be that. Both those guys work way too hard for them and love the game way too much for that not to be the case. I don't think for a second they won't be that. Those guys, they're a big part of the success we've built.

Q. Chet was kind of saying last night that the Spurs pose such a different challenge and it was maybe a little harder in the course of the series to the point you guys needed Chet, but maybe the Chet that you saw most of the year didn't necessarily... Did you have conversations with him about that, about the way the series forced him to react and sort of take a different approach in the off-season so that that doesn't happen again?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: No, I haven't talked to Chet about that. I don't -- I won't. I also don't feel like I need to. Like I didn't perform my greatest this series either. Chet won't come to me with a development plan for the summer, you know what I mean?

Like Chet knows how much I care about this game and want to be the best version of myself every night I'm out there on the floor, and I know how much Chet loves this game and wants to see the best version of himself every night out there on the floor.

Sometimes it just doesn't go that way, like you're not the best version of yourself, for whatever reason it is, and all you can do is use that experience to get better, which is what I've done in my career, which is what Chet's done in his career, and which I have no doubt he'll continue to do.

I would say the version of Chet that we have today is the worst version of Chet from now on, and I say that literally every time I talk about Chet. He's going to get better at basketball. He's just going to be a better player because of the makeup he is, the talent he has, and I don't need to

