Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

Sunday, May 31, 2026

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Isaiah Joe

Press Conference

Q. The last three or four years, it seems like the players have not only come back better with their skills, but the team has been able to identify a bigger picture thing to get better at, either with each other or through training camp or whatever and has gotten better through that, whether it's physicality or passing a couple years ago. Did you think there was something throughout the year that you improved upon, and was there anything early in your mind like hey, here's something that we need to be focused on heading into next year?

ISAIAH JOE: Yeah, I think we did a good job of honing our identity, which is being able to be versatile but playing for each other. That's something that's carried us a long way in our journey. I think that's what's going to continue to carry us is playing for each other.

Like I always say, we've got the best group of guys, the best organization through and through, from top to bottom. That's just one thing everybody does is we grind to be better individually, but we play and coach and all that for each other.

Q. How frustrating was it to not play after playing so well to end the season and get to the Playoffs, and then having to get over that frustration?

ISAIAH JOE: As a player or competitor, it's frustrating, but in the moment, it's more of, like, what can I do to help the team win, and in that moment, being in those games where you don't play, you're just trying to bring energy to the guys.

Obviously with this organization, sometimes you play when you think you're not going to play, and then you don't play when you think you're going to play. You just never know. That's just one thing that we've been really good at, just the ability to stay ready.

Those are moments where you don't know if your number is going to get called, but you've still got to find ways to bring energy or bring life to the team and help them win.

Q. I know it's a short span, but being able to exceed that, (indiscernible) how do you feel like that can help you in the future?

ISAIAH JOE: I think the best way to kind of learn sometimes is in those moments when you're not out there, you get to kind of see how the game is played each and every time, maybe some of the nuances that go in and out of what's going on out there, how it's being coached, just all the little things that you may not notice or pick up on when you're out there on the floor.

As a player who's wanting to grow and get better each and every day, that's something that I kind of take into account when I'm watching from the side is just being able to learn and grow.

Q. With this group it seems like there's that buy-in knowing this is a deep team and not everybody can play the minutes they want to. But there's buy-in to stay within the team, something we hear you guys say a lot. How did you individually arrive at that, and what is that process?

ISAIAH JOE: I think first off, just the character of guys that we have on this team. Ego is out of the window, and we know that in order to be beneficial to this squad, you have to be able to buy into the system. That starts with the front office, with the coaches, everybody. They make it really easy to want to buy into the team. There's nobody here that holds an ego. Nobody's pride is too high to be set aside. That's kind of a strength of ours ever since I've been here.

From hearing the stories, it was like that before I got here, so that's just something that's not hard, and especially whenever you get the right pieces, the right people together to do so.

Q. Isaiah Joe that came to OKC from Philadelphia, versus NBA champion Isaiah Joe now, what's changed in that time?

ISAIAH JOE: I think mentality. I think each and every year, you find new ways to attack the days, attack the game. Being here with this team, I've learned that the work that I put in, it's bigger than me, and so to go back to

buying in and playing for one another, you have a mentality of, like, I want to improve, but I want to win for these guys. I want to play hard for these guys. I think that's very rare to have, everybody on one team that kind of has that mindset. So to me, I think that's something that's been changed.

Q. Feels like you were a more high-volume movement shooter. What was the work that went into that for you?

ISAIAH JOE: Yeah, just understanding that that was where my growth was going to be, being able to squeeze off more shots and be an even more heavier mover. So last summer, that was a big focus of quickening the shot, working on different footworks, which have been things I've always worked on, but it's different when you know that that's going to be the next step to your bread and butter, so really putting an extreme amount of focus into that and not being afraid to experiment in the game.

Q. NBA off-season now. What have you learned about how to maximize that time and how to structure it?

ISAIAH JOE: Yeah, first and foremost, it's being able to take some time away. But then once you get back into the flow of things, having a structured system, having a good team behind you, having the will, the drive to continue to get better, I think that's for me personally how I attack the summers. Once I get going, I'm going full fledged and I've got the right people in my circle to help me get through it and get better.

Q. Is there anything that you're excited about, things in the journey that --

ISAIAH JOE: Still increasing what we just talked about, the movement and the quickening of the shot, extending the range even farther, being able to create a bit but stay within the best of my own game.

I think I'm going to go to the drawing board with my people here in a couple of days and we're going to lay all that out and really figure out what we're going to get better at by meeting with coaches and all that to go from there.

Q. The short off-season last year with the title, did that affect anything going into this season?

ISAIAH JOE: I don't think so. I think it was different, obviously, but I learned how to pack more into the short amount of time that we had. But we knew going into the summer that it was going to be short. So being able to manage the time in that way, be where I need to be more often, then maybe taking a break here and there. But I think time management is something that really you're never crunched for.

Q. How does Mark handle the dialogue with you on a game-to-game basis as far as what role you might play, what your minutes might look like? He said that's the toughest part of this job?

ISAIAH JOE: Yeah, I think one thing that he does an extremely good job of is being transparent, and I think that's kind of what helps people stay ready is whenever you have somebody that kind of eliminates some of the confusion and makes it easier -- sometimes he can't call all the answers, but when he can, he'll try to give you as much insight as possible, try to let you know what's going on, what he sees and all that. Ever since I've been here, he's been doing a pretty good job of that.

Q. A lot of players go different places in the off-season to work on their game. You spend a lot of it back home in Fort Smith. What makes that sort of the central hub for you in the summer?

ISAIAH JOE: Yeah, back to my roots. My family is still out there. All of my training and everybody that I work with is in the area. That makes it a lot easier just to be in the vicinity of everybody.

But for me, I don't need much. I like to be back home, be with my people. I'm a big family man. Just be around my people.

Q. They have some golf courses out there?

ISAIAH JOE: Oh, yeah, sure.

Q. Do you have any advice for college kids whose game is predicated on shooting just like yours about staying ready when you may get 30 minutes a game or you may get 16 seconds?

ISAIAH JOE: Yeah, as a shooter, you never know what the role may call for at any given moment. There may be a situation where your expertise is needed a lot, and there may be a situation where it's not needed as much. But you've got to find that confidence that you have to keep because at the end of the day you're the only person that can truly hold that, and that helps you be ready whenever your number is actually called. You just never know. But you've got to keep that confidence, keep that motivation and keep that grind.

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