

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Ajay Mitchell

Press Conference



Q. You had such an interesting season, a lot of twists and turns, the team obviously did as well. How do you feel like kind of the whole group navigated all of that and you put yourself in the position that you did to have a chance at moving on?

AJAY MITCHELL: Yeah, I mean really, really proud of the team. Especially just throughout this year. I think there's been -- there was a lot of injuries, a lot of things going on and I think we handled it well. Like we talked about before, we're never going to look for excuses. And I think we were very resilient throughout the year, and that's what really helped us to go through the playoffs and be where we ended.

Q. How tough was it to deal with the injuries at this point in the season when you have such a great season and contributing to them getting to this point in terms of you guys getting to this point and then just dealing with the injuries?

AJAY MITCHELL: Yeah, I mean it was tough. I think obviously physically, but also mentally. But it's part of the game. I think at the end of the day, we just look at it as we went through injuries, but we gave it our best shot. So there's no regrets on that end.

Q. Where do you feel like you took the biggest stride this season? From where you were at the start of the season to now, where do you think you made the biggest steps?

AJAY MITCHELL: Kind of a mix of everything. I think confidence. Obviously just going out there and being very confident in my game. And then getting stronger, I think that that helped. Then just trying to figure out ways to help this team win.

Throughout this season just going through that, figuring out how I can help this team and going about that, that was obviously the main thing for me is how can I help this team and really focusing on that. That really helped me to just go out there and play.

Q. How are you feeling physically right now with your calf? You've been through a lot.

AJAY MITCHELL: Yeah, I mean, it's my first calf strain, so just going through it, obviously feeling better and better every day, but still got a lot of work to do to just be a hundred percent healthy.

Q. What does the recovery process from here sort of look like?

AJAY MITCHELL: Just a lot of work. Just getting back to being a hundred percent. Obviously being out here doing rehab and getting stronger, getting my calf ready, and that's really it. I don't really have any other things to do right now but just get healthy.

Q. Are you planning to do that here for the most part?

AJAY MITCHELL: Yeah.

Q. What does a typical off-season look like for you? Some guys go deeper into basketball, some take time away from basketball. What do you do?

AJAY MITCHELL: I like to get away a little bit. Just be able to disconnect from everything from basketball. After that, I don't like to take a big break, because after a week I feel like, okay, I got to get back in the gym and get to work. So definitely will take a break, try to disconnect, and then get right back to work and be prepared for the season.

Q. Can you pinpoint any specific time or specific thing this year that boosted your confidence? Like I personally have seen a big boost in your confidence this year.

AJAY MITCHELL: That's a good question. I don't know if I can really pinpoint like one thing. I think the one thing that I was really confident was just the offseason work I had last off-season. Felt really good coming back here in September and felt like, yeah, I'm going to do everything I can to have an impact and help this team.

So that was really the moment where I got back here in September that I feel like, yeah, I can really help this team.



Q. Your right hand man who's been with you everywhere I see you, I see him. Talk about how he's helped you through this two year process?

AJAY MITCHELL: Yeah, I mean, he's my best friend. I think we have known him since I was a baby. He's been with me throughout every single year and it's great to have people like him around me. He's helped me a lot this year on and off the court, just having someone can I talk to every day and someone that does anything for me. So that's a brother and that really helped me this year.

Q. Are you reaching out to anybody that's dealt with a calf injury to see what they did and what they could have done better?

AJAY MITCHELL: I mean, yeah. I mean, obviously I think guys on the team that have been through injuries, I always want to know what they did, like what are things that they maybe thought they should have done. But at the end of the day, I think it's just about being resilient. For me, it's like I've gone through injuries, obviously my first year and now this year, and it's just, you know, keeping the same mindset. Doing everything I can to be back on the court as soon as possible and then just being smart and doing the right things.

Q. Not to say that you had any expectations coming into your NBA career, but has some of this happened a little bit faster than you thought it would, especially coming on to a team that's as deep as it is?

AJAY MITCHELL: Yeah. I think when you take a step back and look at the bigger picture, I think even just a younger version of myself, if I had to tell him, hey, like in your first year, you're going to win a NBA championship and then in your second year you're going to be really impactful for one of the best teams in the NBA, I don't know if I would be like, yeah, you know?

So it's definitely been an amazing ride so far, but I just look at it as there's so much more that I feel like I can do better and be better at and so much to build on. So I'm really excited for next year. Obviously really upset about this year, but I think we did a good job at turning the page last year from our championship run and I'm sure we'll do the same here.

Q. When you rise through the ranks as fast as you have who are some people who help keep you grounded throughout this whole time?

AJAY MITCHELL: I mean, everybody that's in my circle from just family, friends, like everyone has been keeping me humble in every situation.

And then I think just my faith. I think God, being able to rely on him, never getting too high, never getting too low, and staying in the moment. I think that's really what's helped me the most.

Q. You guys were in the same draft last year. What's it been like seeing him after all he's gone through work his way back and get back more like he did to end the year?

AJAY MITCHELL: It was amazing. His story, I think what he's gone through, and the guy he is, I think it's been amazing just to see. And I'm really happy to see him back on the court. I'm really excited for him, yeah. I mean, it was he was my draft buddy, obviously, my brother. So I'm really happy for him to be healthy and be able to just play and enjoy.

Q. (No Microphone.)

AJAY MITCHELL: No, Jared's a great guy. I think there's no surprise to how he got in the team, and it felt like he was here for years. He's just always happy and always a guy you can talk to. Every time he comes into the locker room, there's like this light, you know. It's amazing to have him on the team. I'm really excited to just be able to build on what we've done this year and keep building. It's exciting.

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