Oklahoma City Thunder
Media Conference

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Press Conference

Q. You really hopped on a moving train and did so as Mark and some of the other guys have said so gracefully. As you had a chance to digest all the experiences and got the ringing out of your ears, what's all this experience been like for you?

JARED McCAIN: It's been pretty insane. I was writing in my journal last night how if you told me four months ago that I would start in some Western Conference Finals games and play the role that I was able to play, like not that I thought you were crazy, but I would look at you a little weird.

So I come back to it a lot. But being able to have this team and how fast that they welcomed me and the city in general, they really showed so much love and they show it. And that wouldn't make me -- that wouldn't allow me to be who I am right now if I wasn't able to be myself like that. I wouldn't be able to do that if they didn't show that love.

And the fact that they allowed me to be myself and have fun with this basketball stuff, it makes the job fun, it makes everything else in life fun. And so I say it a lot, but just being thankful for it, for everything that's happened in my life, and this is a blessing for sure.

Q. A lot of times playoffs and deep in the playoffs can show teams and individuals here's some opportunities for you to advance your game, to really make an impact. It's rare for a team as young as yours and a player as young as you to be presented two of those things at such a young age. What did you maybe get from the last few rounds that are maybe motivators for opportunities for you this summer?

JARED McCAIN: Yeah, I mean, I think it's always been -- I think for me being smaller, like defensively, being able to just guard bigger guys and box out bigger guys. I know since my injury for sure, I've been a lot better, but I know there's so much room for improvement on there. So again being able to have a proper training camp with this team and again learning and being able to guard some of these guys during training camp, that will be amazing for me.

But obviously stuff like that I'm working on in the off-season. And, yeah, I feel like defensively -- and obviously sharpening up offensively, being more efficient, being able to read drives better, read close outs better -- all that stuff is part of the off-season training.

But I think the main thing is just being able to completely not just be just a scorer, to be on the court. Like if my shots aren't going in, still having value on the court.

Q. When you were traded to the Thunder, one of the deepest teams in the League, they didn't give up depth in order to get you. You're just joining this team that already has a cemented rotation and all these things. But you obviously rose through the ranks very quickly. Was there a moment that you realized: I can have a high impact on this team or whatever my skill set, it can have a high impact?

JARED McCAIN: Yeah, when I got traded, I really had no expectation of what was going to come, because I was -- like, I said it before, why do they want me? At this point why would they want me on this championship team. But being able to like -- especially in the beginning, I think Shai and I think Ajay was injured too, to come in and kind of provide some of a role and be able to kind of play through some failures and play through some mistakes, that was great for me, and learning about this team.

Then for me I don't think it was -- I don't know. It was weird. Like I never had expectations for myself coming in, and then once I knew that I could do -- like I can provide some help for this team, it was almost like let me. I want to do anything I can to help this team win.

That's what I think this team is about in general. Every player, even if you get a DNP, everybody's rooting for you. And that's really hard to find. Like truly in each person I feel on this team, they -- I was just talking with Zai, like he really was rooting for me. And that's such an awesome feeling to know that when you're playing through mistakes or you're not playing as much, to know that your team has confidence in you.

So I feel like throughout the beginning stages of even playing when Shai was hurt, even when we went to New York, he took me shopping. And little things like that mean

so much to a young player. And I'm forever thankful for that. They helped me just find my way on the court, continuing to give me confidence. Whether it was like missing shots, making shots, they just said keep doing it, keep shooting it, because that's what you do. And that helped me a lot throughout this whole process.

Q. You played for some great fan bases in college and here as well. How special is that bond between fans and players and how much does that really have an impact on hustling plays?

JARED McCAIN: I think it's huge. Even in high school -- I remember in high school, there were some rival teams that had a bigger crowd than us, and I was always like -- I always hated that. I always wanted the bigger crowd. Luckily, throughout my high school career, we gained some fans.

And then going to Duke, the best program in college basketball. And then being if Philly, of course, there's an amazing fan base here. And coming here, it's a loud city, like they showed crazy amount of love. I'm just going on TikTok and I'll see like me on a latte, my face on a latte. And I'm just like, we got to go get this. I told Nate, but, he -- yeah, just little things like that it means a lot.

And when you come into a city like that, it makes you want to play for the city. It makes you want to play hard for them. And the people who come up to me randomly and say thank you for inspiring my kids or inspiring me, anything like that. Like thank you for playing hard for the city, it means the most to me.

So being able to go into Paycom and play in front of the crowd, it's the most fun feeling any player I think can ever go through. Someone actually sent me that picture framed -- we got it framed. We got it framed. It's hung up already. It looks very nice. So, yeah, it was beautiful.

Q. Somewhat related to that, but just where you're from in California, most people would assume coming to Oklahoma is not what a lot of people want to do. How quickly did you say -- I don't want to put words in your mouth that you fell in love with the city -- but just grew to really enjoy being here? Because it seems like everything we've heard from you you have enjoyed yourself here.

JARED McCAIN: Yeah, I kind of learned quickly I think from -- I mean, Sacramento -- I mean, I was in Riverside California, not the -- it's not like "L.A." L.A. So I think learning that each city is going to provide something different.

I learned that at Duke in Durham. Like I love Durham. A lot of people wouldn't say, that but I love Durham. I love going back there.

So coming here, I knew I was going to find something that I really liked. Whether that's Flower Child or some of my coffee shops that I won't say. But, yeah, just little things like that. I love exploring cities. Me and Nate will just go randomly on our off days, like let's find something to do. So I always fall in love with something like that.

And the city, everywhere I've gone, they're always trying to help. Always trying to help no matter what. So whether it's being able to just pay for somebody's coffee, help somebody out, give someone a picture, like whatever it is, I try and do that. I think that love just kind of all comes back around to you and that energy comes back and that allows me to fall in love with a city.

Q. You seem to have cracked the code here. I don't know if it's a super power or not, but what is the secret sauce behind truly being comfortable in your own skin, not caring what anyone says about you and thriving in that?

JARED McCAIN: I think it started with my family, being able to just tell me that I can do whatever I set my mind to. And I think having that mindset, like I really believe I can do anything. Like anything someone says, you give me time, like I will continue and work at it to achieve it. And I think having that mindset allows me to never get knocked off my course.

I never really consider something a failure until I actually give up on it. So to say that, you know, when I started off, it was like good rookie season and then got hurt and then came back wasn't playing as much. Like I would see comments that are, like, this is a failure, he's a bust, whatever it is. And most of the time I would laugh at it because you're judging me in my second year or whatever. But I always looked at it like, you can't say anything is done or completely a failure until I actually gave up on it.

So when I just continued to work at it and continue to work at something and it gives me that confidence that it doesn't matter what somebody says about my nails or my TikToks or anything like that, because I know what I do when nobody's watching, I know what I do when I'm not filming a TikTok, a lot of people don't see that stuff.

So I love it, I love being able to like work at something and truly get better at it. Shai talks about it a lot and I've always enjoyed hearing his press conferences because he talks about that, like being able to be unwavering in your consistency and how you do your daily habits and how that

builds up to something greater than anything you could imagine. And that's how I'm here. Like I truly, I just work, I just work at something and I never stop, I obsess over it and I get better at it.

So I think that gives me the confidence to never listen to somebody's advice that I don't respect or like just get upset when somebody calls me something that I don't like.

Q. Not sure about your off-season last year, but I would assume a lot of it was rehabbing.

JARED McCAIN: Yeah, terrible.

Q. What's it do for your mindset knowing that you're going into a healthy off-season?

JARED McCAIN: Oh, it's the best. Last season, even when I came here for The Finals, I was trying to just find a gym to do rehab. There's so many little things that go into it. Because, I mean, a knee is definitely not the most, not the easiest thing to deal with. Going on flights it would be, it would get, it would inflame. And it just would be the worst. And rehabbing in the summer is not good because you're obviously not with the team and they can't provide the same things in-season that they can.

So now having an off-season where I can truly just focus on getting better, enjoying it, and perfecting my craft. That's going to be great. I'm really excited for it.

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