

Oklahoma City Thunder

Media Conference

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Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Press Conference



Q. You said at your exit interview that you learn the most from yourself when you fail and you don't achieve your goals. Just what were you able to learn about yourself this summer?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I mean, I didn't learn anything I didn't already know. But the game of basketball, I learned a few things. It's early. So they will unravel as the season goes on. But I definitely learned -- I feel like I got better this summer for sure, to answer your question.

Q. What was the off-season like, given the moves of losing a few long-time teammates in Lu, Wiggs, and Isaiah?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I was saying to somebody yesterday that it feels like they are not even gone. Like it feels like we are going to see them in a few minutes at team pictures, just because those guys, all three of them, were like so embedded in our group.

Obviously we're a really close, tight-knit group, and those guys had a big hand in not only our success on the court but the relationships and the brotherhood off the court. And that will never change. Those guys will only be one call away from me and vice versa.

But with that being said, it's the business of the NBA, right. I don't think anybody has played with all 12 guys their whole career. That's how it goes. It sucks a little bit. But yeah, it is what it is. And we have a few new additions that I'm super excited for, and that will be really fun just to -- like part of the excitement of having new players and things like that is figuring out how to make each other better, and hopefully that unlocks new things for us. It will be exciting, regardless, and those guys will also be missed at the same time.

Q. You've been in the league long enough, so you know players do move, but you won a championship with these guys. Have you ever talked to other players who have gone through the same thing, or do you just kind of go through it yourself, losing players that you

won a championship with, because you've been in the league long enough? But these were guys, core guys. Had you talked to any players about that, other players around the league, or you just kind of dealt with it yourself?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I dealt with it myself. Yeah, I mean, it's -- I think because of how close we were as a group, like the success we had on the court doesn't even come into a factor.

Like my mind never really went to, like, what on the court is going to be like. It's more just like the brotherhood and the bus rides without them and things like that. And I think for this group, the relationships are so organic and so natural, they like almost come first in a situation like that.

For me, it was less about basketball and more about the individuals and not being around them every day that was going to be the hardest.

Q. Of the goals you've talked about before, the things that are still on the list, 50-40-90 is one of them. How do you approach that as a goal? Obviously you want to make as many shots as you possibly can, but anything you can do as you envision that?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Swing at it and keep swinging until you get it. And if you don't get it, keep swinging.

Q. One of the biggest story lines was you moving from Nike to Converse. Can you speak to that and anything you can tease about your signature shoe?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I mean, I'm super excited about the future. Yeah, like, my experiences have been great so far with Nike. They have been amazing.

But yeah, like, for me, the mission and goal won't change. I'm going to continue to try to, I guess, push the innovation and creation forward, regardless of who I'm with, and try to motivate youth, be a good role model for youth regardless.

But Nike is a great engine to have behind you for sure.

Q. Chet had a great year last year, but didn't play well at the end. How important is it that he puts that behind

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him, and what gives you confidence that he's going to be able to keep the ascension that he's shown through three years?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: So your first question was what gives me the confidence that it will be behind him? I mean, Chet's a really, really good basketball player. Basketball is like life; it goes ups and downs. I mean, he works super hard. He has the right intentions. He gets the job done every night. He's super motivated. And just because he had a bad outing to some doesn't mean those things change about him. He's the same guy, same character.

And I expect Chet to continue to get better, like he's done his whole career. Still super young. Still has so many games ahead of him that I'm not worried about his development and him growing and ultimately this team growing because of how big of a cornerstone he is for us.

Q. You mentioned the new players that you're excited to play with. Do you have any early impressions of the rookies, Aday, Bennett and everybody else?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I haven't, like -- I have no early impressions. I haven't really seen, besides, like, their college stuff.

Yeah, obviously all impactful players. They all have NBA skills. They wouldn't be here if they didn't. But yeah, I'm excited to kind of unravel that as training camp and preseason goes on, and hopefully I could help them as much as possible to hit the ground running and start a successful NBA career.

Q. The decision to play off-ball with Team Canada, how did that come about, and is that something you hope to incorporate this season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Every season, and every off-season, I use it to try to find ways to become a more well-rounded basketball player. And that was just an area of the game where I felt like I could be a better basketball player. And some summers, it's defense; some summers, it's off-the-dribble shooting; some summers, it's posting up.

And yeah, nothing more than that. Just try to become the best basketball player I can be when it's all said and done.

Q. Having Dub back, what will that mean for you and for the team?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, well, we'll have an All-NBA talent who puts the ball in the basket and guards 1 through 5. So that will make life easier not only for myself

but for the rest of the group.

And above all, like I'm just excited for Dub to be able to play. Injury sucks, obviously. It's hard to have the game taken from you like that, especially when you work so hard. But yeah, I'm excited for him just to be able to play. Like, loves playing basketball. Just that part of his life coming back will be exciting for him personally.

Q. How much, if at all, do you think about another MVP and what would that mean, and is it something that you ponder? There aren't many people who have won three straight.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I mean, no different than any other year. Like, for me, like I started the season with just, like, try to be the best player I can be, try to implement the things I just worked on.

But from there, like the decision for MVP is like literally 82 games away. So it's like, I'm not going to win the award in the first week of the season. So it's hard for me to, like, put so much into it and think about it. Like I've just got to be the best player I can be for this basketball team, win as many games as possible. And whenever those things lie, they will.

That kind of recipe for me in the past has kind of worked, and I've been fortunate to win two in a row. But yeah, no different for me going into this season.

Q. Jared got here midseason last year and ended up making a big impact in the playoffs, in the Lakers and Spurs series. What have you seen from him or talked to him about this off-season, and how do you think he's going to continue to grow? And what has he brought to the team on and off the floor that you've seen during your time together?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: What was your first question?

Q. How do you think he's going to continue to grow into a role now that his role is more defined here?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I mean, honestly speaking, the rarity with JMac is like nothing will change for him. He, like -- the player and individual he is, like he just oozes confidence, whether he's playing five minutes a game, 35 minutes a game, like, you know what you're going to get from him.

So I don't think much will change for him. I think he'll go out there, put the ball in the basket at a high level, do it in spots where we need him. He'll be a plus defender. He'll



do whatever the team needs to win. He'll be a star in his role.

I think with him, it's just the more opportunity, the more he'll show, and the better he'll get, the more reps he gets under his belt. And I don't think that will change. He's who he is, and we're lucky to have a guy like that.

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