

NBA All-Star Media Day

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Western Conference

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Media Day Press Conference



Q. Shai, a lot of deserving candidates in the West, but as you think about your year and what you all have kind of accomplished, what do you think has resonated with people to make you an All-Star starter?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I think winning games speaks for itself. That's why everybody plays the game. That's why you watch the game. You want your teams to win. It's everybody's ultimate goal, and I think that obviously this year we've gotten off to a really good start in that category. I think winning games is the biggest.

Q. You said in your exit interview last year, when asked how last season compared to all-time greats, that you don't give energy to that kind of thing. This thing, being an All-Star starter, kind of being a turning point in a career, I wonder if you take a break now to kind of reflect and put into perspective what this might mean for a potential Hall of Fame career?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I honestly try to stay very present, try to stay in the moment, not look too far ahead, not look back and kind of just take advantage of every moment, whether it's me working or it's me just being grateful for where I am today. I try to just stay in the moment, and it's worked out pretty good thus far. So I try to continue to do so.

Q. Shai, you've obviously seen LeBron in the All-Star Game as long as you can remember, given it's been 20 years that he's been in it. I'm curious, since he's obviously nearing the end of his career, whenever that does happen, there's been a lot of discussion about who might be the next face of the league. Do you have any thoughts or predictions on who would take the mantle from him as being the face of the NBA?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I have no clue. I think that's your guys' job to decide and figure out. But it will be an amazing league regardless. Obviously, he's done amazing things for this league and for the game of basketball. You don't want to take him for granted, obviously. But when he's gone, yeah, it will still be great.

Q. Shai, you talked a couple minutes ago about keeping in the moment and how that's worked out for you so far. How much more difficult is that when the team is doing what it's doing, when you're getting the mentions you're getting? And now that you're very prominent in the MVP race as well, how difficult is it to block out all of that noise? Good noise, but still noise.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: For me, it's not any more difficult. I think I've learned through experience -- and obviously as a young kid it's easy to get caught up in it, just going back to high school and rankings and things like that.

I've just found so much success from, not blocking it out, but not letting it faze me or control me. I think I've just learned through that experience and figure out what works for me and then try to run with it.

To this point, it's not any harder, because I've grown through it being hard, I think, in the past.

Q. Shai, you've been with the Thunder ever since they started the rebuild. You guys have had a lot of ups and downs. Two years ago, it was Josh here at All-Star by himself. Last year you had three. Now you guys have had five. Could you talk about the growth you guys have had in such a short span.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It's amazing. It's a good feeling, just seeing the thing develop, not only for myself, but for my peers and guys that I'm around all the time and guys that are like brothers to me, just because we do everything together. It's exciting. Not only for myself, like I said.

We've just got to try to keep pushing forward. Whatever's been working, just try to continue to do so and keep getting better.

Q. As a leader of the team, what do you guys think you guys need to win a championship? What are those areas that you, as a leader, identify that you need to work on?



SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Good question. I'm not too sure. Usually experience, the teams that have gone through multiple playoff series and multiple guys that have gotten to that level know what it takes to get over the hump and do so. That's something that, honestly, just has to come with us playing in more games. Maybe we give it time. Maybe we don't.

But we have no ceiling on what we think we can do this year. We kind of take the same mentality and just stay in the moment, plug away every day. Where we get at the end of the year, whenever the end of our season is, we'll look back and make adjustments and try to figure out then. As of right now, we just try to stay focused on the task at hand.

Q. What kind of message are you and the Thunder looking to send to the rest of the league as you look to close out the regular season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I don't think it's a message to the rest of the league. I think it's a mentality, almost like a message to ourselves that the job's not finished, not even close. We're a little bit more than halfway through the season.

But our goal wasn't to be 37-17 halfway through the season. We want bigger things and better things. Obviously, we're not done. So, yeah, I think it's more of a message to ourselves.

Q. Your head coach is in the conversation for Coach of the Year. What makes him so special at his craft?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: He's super, super humble, a great guy, first and foremost. Really down to earth, easy to talk to, easy to work with. Easy to get along with.

Then as far as on the court, he has an ability to -- he always understands what the right thing to say is. And the things that matter, he always emphasizes. When he speaks, guys listen and guys understand that it's something that is going to make or break our team.

I think that over time we've seen his -- not only his development, but we've seen kind of his schemes and his work coming to life and really lead this pack and steer us in the right way. We all have his respect and appreciate him.

Q. Now that we've kind of seen the 65-game minimum in practice and what it means in terms of awards, what do you think of it just generally? And going forward, do you think it's a proper way to kind of set a baseline for awards and things?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I'm not too sure. I think no matter what there's like a fine line in -- like when it comes down to it, there's always a fine line in games played and availability. I think the league has the right intention in trying to make that line a little bit bolder and easier to make a decision.

Now, I try to be as available as I can every night, not only for that, but just for the love of the game. But as far as how the rule goes, I don't really have an opinion. I'm going to try to be available for my team to win basketball games every night. If I can't be available, then I just can't. It is what it is.

Q. You know there are so many college basketball players aspiring to go to the NBA. What would be your biggest piece of advice on how to get there?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Work on your craft as much as possible. Pretty cliché. But I would say be a star in your role -- that's also a cliché. I think when guys figure out what their game is going to look like, what their roles are going to be, and then attack it with everything they've got, you find the most success. I'd say that.

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