

# Emirates NBA Cup

Friday, December 13, 2024

## Atlanta Hawks

### Trae Young

Semifinal Practice Day



**Q. Trae, I'm curious, year two of this NBA Cup experience, a lot of young guys on the squad, I'm curious what your perspective is. Do you think having these games that matter a little bit more is a great opportunity for a young team like yours where guys are still learning?**

TRAE YOUNG: Yeah, I feel like this team has been embracing the challenge each and every night from the beginning of the season. We haven't looked too far ahead in any moment. We're just taking it day by day.

Even though early on in the season we may have had some struggles and some bumps in the road and some guys out, we stuck with the process and focus on each day.

I feel like this Cup we've shown we've done the same thing and not looked too far ahead and just focused on the next opponent.

**Q. I think you're averaging 21 and 12, something only Magic and Isaiah have done over the course of a season. Do you see a maturation in your game? The numbers suggest you're shooting less, distributing more. Obviously you guys are much better like all teams are when the ball moves. Where is your game going? Where are you critical of yourself? What have you said to yourself over the years I've got to do this to make myself better and make my team better?**

TRAE YOUNG: For me, I've always said since day one I've always been able to adjust to whatever team I've been around or been a part of or what the coach wants from me, like I've always been able to adjust. The narrative about me not being able to do certain things or being too mad or frustrated about certain things is -- I mean, just aren't true.

I think you're just now being able to see like with the young team we have, just some of the different things we've been doing this year, I think just now you're starting to kind of see it because the results are showing and we're winning now. We're here in this final four of the Cup, and it's a big deal.

I think that's why you're seeing it and understanding it, but for me I've always been this way. Like I've been this way since high school when I played with the No. 1 player in my class. I wasn't the best player on my team, and I was okay with it. I was able to adjust, and I learned, and I was able to feed and eat off that, and I learned.

I learned back then that, when you win, everything else takes care of itself. That's kind of what's happening right now.

**Q. You've pulled off as a team some big wins just to get to this stage of the competition. How do you assess both yourselves and your opponents tomorrow against Milwaukee and in the bigger Eastern Conference race?**

TRAE YOUNG: Yeah, we definitely played some really tough teams to get here. Like I said, we just really focused on the next opponent. From Boston, when I didn't even play, everybody went out there and played their tails off and found a way to get a win. Then we just kept playing and building each and every game and just focusing on the next opponent.

Now we've got the Bucks and obviously they're a great team, two future Hall of Famers that you've got to be ready for. We know it's not going to be an easy task, but we're definitely up for the challenge and we'll be ready.

**Q. We talked about Jalen and his playmaking before, but how else have you noticed him maybe making his presence known? Not necessarily on the court, but maybe in between whistles or timeouts or anything like that?**

TRAE YOUNG: I feel like the more you play, the more experience you have, the more you feel your voice can be heard and people around you will listen to you when you speak up. I feel like that's what you see in Jalen each and every game more and more. The more experience he has and he's continuing to have success throughout the start of this season, you're just going to continue to see him talk more and give more advice, and on the team we're going to continue to hear his voice more and more.



The more he gets opportunities and situations and he's playing more. So it's good that he's getting to see some more action this year, and he's helping our team obviously a lot.

**Q. Your pick-and-roll game has been exceptional this season, as you said, averaging 12 assists. What are you necessarily looking for in the pick-and-roll specifically this season that has changed?**

TRAE YOUNG: Yeah, great question. I feel like for me it's not like a season-by-season thing on what I change or look at. It's really a night-by-night thing on what the defense brings and what type of defense they're in, whether they're in a drop coverage or whether they're trapping me off the screen.

I struggle a lot with turnovers sometimes, and a lot of it comes in the beginning of the games when I'm trying to figure out what kind of defense they're in and things like that. So that's something I can be better at and I'll be better at going forward.

But it's more of a nightly basis thing. If they're in drop coverage, if they're blitzing me, if they're hedging, things like that, that's kind of what I look at in the pick-and-roll.

**Q. You have the rivalry with Madison Square Garden that is fun, and it goes back to '21. Now you're playing the Bucks, who also in '21 you had the really contested Conference Finals. I know it's different, but do you harbor, I guess, some of those memories or just some of the same passion when you're thinking about the Bucks and thinking about what happened a couple years ago kind of like what we saw for you in New York?**

TRAE YOUNG: I don't know. I don't let past things like really make me mad or things like that, like hold a grudge on those things. I'm not like -- yeah, I'm young, but I'm not super young anymore where I let those things really affect me.

Even with New York, it's like I didn't -- I wasn't coming out of the gates taunting or doing anything like that. Again, they started the chant later in the game, you know what I'm saying?

Again, I just try to come in and have fun and put on a show. With the Bucks, I remember it like it was yesterday, me stepping on Sean's [NBA official Sean Corbin] foot, hurt my foot, and I just -- it definitely hurts, but this is a new team. I'm part of a new team. They're a different team. I can't let my past like affect my mental and focus right now

because this is a totally different team and I'm at a totally different place right now.

**Q. First off, wanted to first give you your flowers, bro. You're doing really well this season. Two, I wanted to talk to you about, especially in this era, a lot of kids don't play anymore. I saw you, you and Kev have probably been to every open gym in L.A. that I can think of imaginable, and you're just playing, just making sure you're playing and sharpening your talent and skill. Also, wanted to ask you about the nutmeg. We're going to start calling that the Trae way going forward. You hit someone with a drop dribble and put it between his legs, and then after that, I think Max showed me a video, you did a double nutmeg. I ain't never seen that in my life to be honest with you. Talk about that move, and then for the kids out there, playing and being in every open gym and how that helps you get your game better.**

TRAE YOUNG: I mean, the nutmeg is like -- that's something I've been doing since high school. I always watched CP when he was with the Hornets and things like that when I was young. I would always see him nutmeg guys, nutmeg big men. I started to doing it in high school games and transition and throwing it between guys' legs. I don't know if we need to call it the Trae way, but I do do it a lot.

I learned from the guys above me, and the same with my hooping and playing. I mean, KD played a lot of games in OKC, you know what I'm saying? When I was in middle school, I was watching them. They went to The Finals and all those things. So I've had some really great role models that I can look up to from afar and kind of steal bits and pieces from their games.

Not just K, but a lot of players, but him specifically. He plays a lot of basketball and runs. From what I've heard and what I've listened to, and conversations with him too, you learn by playing. You are get in shape by playing too. That's something that we can stay in shape and still get better at the same time.

That's kind of why I play and never stop playing when the summer starts.

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