

# Emirates NBA Cup

Friday, December 13, 2024

## Houston Rockets

### Fred VanVleet

Semifinal Practice Day



**Q. Fred, I've mentioned one of the ways you guys have been able to be successful this year is kind of junking up the game defensively. When you notice you guys are holding a team under the normal scoring average, taking them out of their offense, do you enjoy junking up the game for your opponent?**

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, for sure. I think it's just a testament to our defense and our approach. It takes a lot of energy and focus, especially for a young group. So I know any time we're locked in on defense usually bodes well for us, and then it becomes a possession game toward the end of the game. You want to close it out.

Most of the time we're not scoring either. But for the most part, being able to hold teams under their average, especially now with the way the scoring is, I think is a testament to our group as a whole.

**Q. Do you feel that, as the season goes on, maybe as this tournament goes on, you guys need to get your offense closer to where the defense is? And does the shooting have to pick up to make that happen?**

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, it will come. We're still a young group playing together, figuring it out. We've got young players. We haven't been together that long, still figuring out what works. Guys are still figuring out their own games.

But as long as we guard on a night-to-night basis, we have a chance to win. The goal in mind obviously is to have a better flow and rhythm and be able to find that rhythm more consistently, especially toward the end of the season.

**Q. I'm curious what your experience has been like coming from Toronto where you played for one team your whole career, kind of worked your way up to be a veteran, and now coming here with a young team and now you're really getting a chance to see them flourish. What's that been like for you?**

FRED VANVLEET: It's been fun. It's been fun. I haven't had this much fun playing in a long time. Just to be a part

of these guys' journey and success you see, being able to enjoy the little things again.

After winning a championship, you kind of get spoiled and jaded. You just always focus on getting back to that mountaintop, which is hard to do. To be back with a group that is just excited to win, you saw the reaction the other night when we won to go here.

So getting back to enjoying the little things and the small victories, but also trying to be that example for these guys to know kind of what it looks like when you win big.

**Q. Just kind of going over your journey, every team that you've been to, you see the success that follows with you being there. One thing that I remember on the podcast, you talked about being a small guard. Especially in this new NBA, all we hear about is the big guards now. What can you say to the prospects out there that are aspiring to be like you and aren't the big guards out there? What can you say in terms of defending? Playing 94 feet, picking up full court, doing those little things and how that can get you the role and get you to the NBA, and then you can show how to work like you and how you can carve out that role.**

FRED VANVLEET: I think I always just focus on winning. I was just trained and developed as a kid to be a winner, and the only thing that matters is wins and losses. So however that comes about for each individual is different. For me, it was just trying to find impact. Whether that's defensively making plays or getting guys shots or making my teammates better, I try to bring value wherever I go and make everyone around me better wherever I go. That's something I've had some success doing.

Obviously the work, in terms of your skill work and talent as a player, once you get on the big stage in the moments, that's where the work shines. I think the way the game has grown now with so many different stats and analytics and different things, how we consume the game, I think people forget the name of the game is wins and losses, you know what I mean?

If you're the type of player that contributes to that in a

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**Q. Having won a Finals, as you mentioned, how curious are you about what the next potentially two days will be like for being in the final four? How excited are you to see your young teammates play in this environment when they haven't really experienced anything like what you've seen?**

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, like I said, I think it's fun. We're excited to be here. I wouldn't say we're happy to be here, in terms of we're just happy to be here. We want to win. We want to win the whole thing. That was our goal from the beginning is to win the championship. Just getting here wasn't really our goal.

But it's new. It's new to everybody. I think I watched LeBron James pop champagne in December of last year, you know what I mean? I don't know if anybody could have ever imagined that 20 years ago.

So it's new. It's new to everybody. I'm just enjoying it, staying in the moment and enjoying the moment. Just realizing what we're building for our group may be different from everybody else, but we're on our own journey and our own path. Just reminding our guys to stay in the moment and go out there and play your butt off.

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