

Emirates NBA Cup

Saturday, December 14, 2024

Oklahoma City Thunder

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Semifinal Postgame



OKC Thunder 111, Houston Rockets 96.

Q. Shai, such a physical first half, and you guys struggled to shoot. How did you find the rhythm that you were able to get to in the second half?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, we just at the end of the day trusted our work. We had the right intentions. Offensively in the first half just didn't make enough shots. They went into the half with a little bit of a lead. Yeah, we trusted our own work and we knew if we kept getting stops, we'd be able to give ourselves a chance, and we did so.

Q. Shai, yesterday you mentioned when you and Dillon go at each other you always try to take each other's heads off. Obviously, it got pretty intense between you two guys. What's it like going up against somebody like that that's so intense defensively?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it's fun. It makes you better. That's what this league is about, competing against the best in the world, and defensively he is that for sure. I like to think that of myself offensively. He gives me a chance to really see where I'm at, a good test. I'd say I handled it pretty well.

Q. Today, Las Vegas, the atmosphere, can you talk about the "MVP" chants, the ovation at the end of the game? Just your thoughts on the NBA in Las Vegas?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it was pretty sweet. Obviously, I haven't -- we don't play here every year, but yeah, the environment was dope. The fans were into it. A basketball city. It was really fun playing out there.

Q. What do you think from a player's perspective about Las Vegas as a basketball town, and if this city does get an NBA team, what do you think the players will think about coming through Vegas to play?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I think it would be great. The Cup is here, Summer League is here; we can feel the basketball culture in Vegas as players when we come. I think it's only a matter of time. The city really

embraces basketball, and they deserve it for sure.

Q. You already have some single elimination game experience in your career. What does this look more like, like FIBA basketball or NCAA when you play NBA Cup?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it does have a little bit -- this had a little bit of like a March Madness feel just because it was like neutral grounds, nobody is home, you're on the road. Like you said, it's single game elimination. It's a little bit of nerves, and once the basketball tips it's just basketball at the end of the day, and you do whatever it takes to win. Obviously, a little bit more is at stake where if you lose you go home, but games like that are good experience for us, especially with where we want to end up.

Q. You've been in so many games with Lu over the course of time, the way he laid his body on the line and he went 4-for-4 from three in the second half. What's your reaction as he's being the gamer that he is in this one?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, he's a special player. He gives everything he has defensively every night, does the dirty work. Some nights he gets two shots, some nights he gets 10 shots, some nights he makes five threes, some nights he doesn't get a three, and he doesn't let it waver. Especially myself, I don't take it for granted, the role he plays for this team. So many guys on the team do that role, but Lu is very special at it, and he has his imprint all over this group with how hard he plays, how physical he plays, how tenacious he is.

But with that being said, tonight was a Lu Dort night. Nothing we haven't seen before.

Q. You're facing the Bucks, previous NBA champions. What's your mindset as a player facing Giannis and the Bucks?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, obviously some really good players over there. It's the same every night. We've got to try to make sure that they play in their weaknesses instead of their strengths. It's a lot easier said

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than done, but if we want to win, we have to get it done, and that will be our main focus.

Q. When you envision Jalen's ceiling or his capacity as a player, how good can he be?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, he can be, like, very special. As good as he wants to be. He has a really good feel for the game. It's so hard to pick up or teach this far in your career. He just understands how to play basketball, when and where to make reads, and then he works hard, and his skill set is only going to continue to grow because of those things. But yeah, special talent for sure.

Obviously for a little bit there he was playing the 5 for us at 6-5 to speak to his versatility. There's so many things he does on the basketball court for us that are on a very high level, it would be stupid for me to give him a ceiling. I think he can go as far as he wants to, as far as he takes it.

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