

Emirates NBA Cup

Saturday, December 14, 2024

Oklahoma City Thunder

Jalen Williams

Semifinal Postgame



OKC Thunder 111, Houston Rockets 96

Q. Jalen, that first half was just a defensive showdown, and then second half you guys score 70 points. I think you go 9-of-12 from three. What were some of the differences you felt on the floor offensively in the second half?

JALEN WILLIAMS: We were getting the same looks. I think we slowed down a little bit. There's so much going on in these games, kind of had to settle in the first half, but our defense was great, so that carried over the whole game. Offense comes and goes, but when you can play defense and kind of shut certain things down, I think we did a good job of that, and offense came late.

Q. I just wanted to get your reaction to that play where Shai lost Dillon Brooks on that crossover and then you hit the three and you threw up a shrug and you were smiling.

JALEN WILLIAMS: Yeah, that was not supposed to go in, and it did. That was the story of the second half.

Yeah, he's been great, finding us late, trusting us to make shots like that. So happy to knock it down. It was kind of a big shot, big moment, momentum was kind of shifting. Like I said, we were generating looks in the second half that we were getting in the first half and we were making them, so that makes it fun.

Q. Obviously this is a newer competition for the NBA and it's in a neutral site, which makes it a little different, but it seemed like it got a little chippy there for a second. Do you feel that kind of playoff atmosphere happening, or what would you attribute that to, that it got kind of heated?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Our playoff atmosphere for people who are not familiar is very hard to replicate in Oklahoma, so I wouldn't say it's that, but it does have a certain energy to it that makes it very competitive. It's probably because of the money. But there is like a very competitive aspect to it. Obviously, everybody wants free money.

Q. What have you learned about life playing next to a superstar and what it demands of you?

JALEN WILLIAMS: It has nothing to do with actually being on the court. I think the way that he approaches basketball and his life outside of the court is something that nobody else really gets to see except us, and us being as close as we are, too, I get to learn how he carries himself on and off the floor, and I think that's helped my development.

Then I think just on the floor, when you're the guy on the team, you're responsible for playing good or bad, and I think he does a good job of carrying that and trusting us.

He just does a good job of staying within the team and not letting a lot of the outside noise affect him, and he's been the perfect role model for me and the rest of the guys to one day try and reach that level and obviously just be able to help him during the season.

Q. As a guy who defends, scores, passes, plays defense, plays center --

JALEN WILLIAMS: That's a lot, huh.

Q. You've heard the saying jack-of-all-trades, master of none, how do you know what to master as you develop in your career?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I don't know if that really applies to my thing. I think every year I just try and master one thing, so when I get to certain points, I know that this year I can master one thing and then I can go to next year and I can master multiple things, and I think that's what makes it unique to be very good at a lot of things, so every year I can kind of focus on one thing or two things at once and do that.

But I try and take one thing at a time and not rush it. My dad is big on just one year at a time. You're not playing this for one year. I'm trying to be in the NBA for 15 plus and do that. Over the course of my work, I would like to master multiple things a year and see where I pan out.

Q. You've already talked about the money a little bit,

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but what would winning the NBA Cup mean to you and the team?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think it's a very good test for us later on to kind of understand the Playoffs and just kind of simulate that. I think that's the biggest thing. Obviously aside from the money, I think just having the amount of media that we have here and how much more intense the games are, it's kind of a good simulation of focus when we're not on the court to be able to come in here and play and get the job done. Aside from that, we're trying to replicate a playoff kind of feel and go from there.

Q. I want to ask you about two different guys. Lu goes 4-for-4 from three in the second half, and then Shai gets fouled twice on threes. I wonder about your reaction to the gamer that Lu is, and then also maybe the way that Shai's gravity is changing a little bit offensively that teams are really honoring that three and respecting it?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I'll do Shai first. Shai is not afraid to take shots that he works on. That's one of those things where it forces the other team to respect it because he's such a good scorer, and then he also understands that that's opening up driving lanes for us to be able to shoot.

Obviously for Lu, we call him "Big Game Lu" obviously for a reason. He just does a good job of staying in the moment. He understands his role and he's always ready to make the play. He didn't shoot it particularly well in the first half I don't think, but just being able to stick with it and play defense and then still be ready in those big moments when we need him to hit shots is big, and his confidence is never shaken. Definitely one of the key guys, and he knows it.

Q. Looking forward, you guys will play against the Bucks, which could be a team with a totally different style, and you guys haven't played them this season. How will you get prepared to play a team that has Giannis and Damian?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think from an X's and O's standpoint we'll leave it to the coaches, but basketball is about who can make the other team play on their terms, so we're going to go out there and play how we usually do, and I'm sure the coaches will have a good game plan for us to be able to go back out there and do our thing.

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