

Emirates NBA Cup

Monday, December 16, 2024

Oklahoma City Thunder

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Championship Practice Day



Q. Now that you've been here for a few days, you've got a chance to sort of feel what this experience is like, what's your impression of the NBA Cup and what does a team like yours take away from this experience?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: It's been fun. Obviously the added stakes in the game gives it a little bit of a different feel. It's good prep for postseason. It's obviously heightened stakes than a regular season, 82-game season and it's good to get reps in games that mean a little bit more and have stakes to it. It's been fun and beneficial to the group for sure.

Q. You get to prep for a team a little bit longer than in a regular season, usual situation, what have you guys noticed as you start looking at film on them?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Talented group, obviously. They speak for themselves. Obviously, their head of their snake presents its challenges. We at the end of the night have to be who we are and have to take the fight to them. I think if we do that, we'll be all right.

Q. What do you think about this neutral court experience, how is it going to impact the game tomorrow?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it will be fun. It gives the game a little bit of like a March Madness feel with the neutral site, like home-court advantage, but at the end of the night, the better team will win. It's about focusing on being that.

Q. Obviously you just had a game against Luka and you've got Giannis here. I know it's not your individual matchup, but how do you approach when you have this kind of a spotlight game against some of the other guys who are going to be MVP contenders?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: To be completely honest with you, I don't differentiate games on who I play against. If we play the worst team in the league, the best team in the league, I'm trying to take their head off. I am trying to be the best version of myself every night I step on the floor.

And I think that's why I've been able to grow the way I have as a person and a player is because every night is an opportunity for me to get better, and whoever stands across that line doesn't change that.

Q. There's been a lot of talk about changing the All-Star Game to basically a small tournament format. Would you be, as a two-time All-Star, likely heading there again, is that something you would support or is there something you would like to see them do differently with the All-Star Game?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, if I get a chance to go, obviously it's a blessing. Support whatever they do because it's an honor to be there.

But obviously with the elephant in the room being us competing, them trying to shake things up is expected and makes sense.

But at the end of the day, it's going to come down to whether the players wanting to go at it, and I would love to see that. Love to be a part of that for sure, and hopefully it happens.

Q. I think you've been fouled on a three-pointer three times in the last two games, and as you continue to invest in different parts of the game over the course of your career, are you feeling the gravity that you're creating even changing week-to-week or month-to-month over the course of your career?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, look, I was always taught growing up, like basketball is going to come down to taking what the defense gives you and being a weapon. Like as many times down the court in as many ways as you can, and that's just what I focused on in my career, summer in, summer out, season in, season out.

And that's just -- it's just been like another hurdle, another steppingstone. Like I just try to be a better version of myself, and make sure that the defense has to pay for whatever they try to throw at me. And I've gotten better at it every year, and it's been work paid off.



Q. Ever since I know you, you've always been different in terms of creating your own wave. In April, you re-signed to Converse. Talk about that and changing that brand, and then also, I saw the new logo. I know how creative you are. Did you create that logo yourself? I know you like to draw; you're an artist yourself. Speaking about that, did you create that logo that just dropped with Converse?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I try, yeah, like you said, to be like a pioneer. I try to create my own wave on and off the court. Try to just do things my way. Growing up I was always taught to be a leader, never a follower, and so that's kind of instilled me.

And then I did draw the logo. Created it myself, and I'm glad the way it came to life for sure.

Q. What are the biggest life lessons you've learned so far during your career, and especially the lessons you want to share with kids all over the world that see you as an inspiration?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Biggest life lesson. I think basketball is a lot like life, and I think I would say like what you give to the game, the game will give back to you.

And you can't cheat it, just like life. If you want to be a doctor; if you want to be a middle school teacher; if you want to be a dentist, whatever you want to be, what you put into it, you'll get out of it. And there's no faking. There's no fooling the universe, it knows.

And for the kids out there, I guess that just leads into working hard. That's what I've been able to -- how I've been able to build all of this, is just working hard and not caring what anybody has to say about me and doing things my way because when it's all said and done, you don't want to have any regrets, no doubts. You want to know that you gave it your all and that you did it how you wanted to do it.

Q. I wanted to ask you, talk about Hartenstein and what he's added to the team this year.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: He's been amazing. Obviously, we lacked a little bit of physicality in the past as a group, and he's been able to plug that hole immediately.

And then the little things he does, like his IQ offensively, his passing, his play-making, his touch around the rim, his screening, he's opened the game up for guys like myself and the rest of the team.

And then the most underrated part, I would say is his

unselfishness as a player. Like every night he doesn't care if he has 20 points, zero points, if he has 15 rebounds or zero rebounds.

As long as we win and he affects it, he's happy. Like there have been so many times, like I've tried to get him in a position to score, like help him get in a spot and he's just like, "I don't care. As long as you get open, I'll figure out the rest."

For him to reciprocate that is a cool feeling, and the teammate he is is what's been special so far.

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