

Emirates NBA Cup

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Oklahoma City Thunder

Jalen Williams

Championship Practice Day



Q. Has the reality that you guys are playing for \$500,000 tomorrow night set in. Obviously you're here to win the thing and you're all competitive people, so any time there's competition you want to do your best at it. But what does the money mean to a lot of guys?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Yeah, not everybody gets the same paycheck in the NBA. We have guys that are on two-way contracts and some guys that are fighting to stay in the league. So obviously that money is a bigger deal for some people than others, so we definitely play for that.

Also, we're playing a really good team. So there's a lot of competitive fire, if not more; that means more than obviously making the money. I like to win. So obviously it's like a big deal. And we've been saying that the whole time. Like if we are going into the Cup we might as well win the whole thing, and you play good teams while you're doing it.

So there's an aspect to that. As a team, this is like the closest thing that you can get to a playoff environment for the most part throughout the whole season aside from a couple games are going to feel like that. It's a good, like, learning moment for us to be able to have a lot of media -- we are having like media before practice. We get to like simulate a lot of what's going on during the playoffs, during those stretches, to where we can kind of flex that muscle now and be better on later in the season.

So there's a lot more involved than obviously the money. J-Will has been big on the money thing for us.

Q. You had all sorts of matchups across the league, different positions, playing center. With a guy like Antetokounmpo, you may see quite a bit of time on him tomorrow. What are some keys for you tomorrow as you lineup that matchup?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Whenever you're guarding really good players, it's not about just one person guarding somebody. It's about a team effort. And that's with anybody. Obviously, he's an extremely good player and kind of like a one-of-one.

So we'll have a good game plan in place. Coaches always do a good job of putting us in the right place. But it's going to come down to how well as a team do we execute keeping guys like that at bay. Obviously, they have Damian Lillard, too.

So just trying to find different ways a team that we can kind of slow them down will be big for us.

Q. Coach talked about how after the NBA Cup Championship Game, you guys are going to have a quick turnaround, go over to the East Coast and have to play Orlando and Miami. What kind of mindset change is that going to have for the group to be able to shift gears back-to-back in the regular season and having to play those back-to-back games?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think the good teams keep the same mindset no matter what the game is. I think the stakes as far as like prizes and stuff will be higher but we're still going to be going against another good Orlando team and we're going to play against a good Miami team.

Having that maturity to know that there's not going to be a competitive gear switch I think will be big for us.

Q. You mentioned that this is the closest you can get to like a playoff environment. Having played a couple NBA Cup games, how close is this to a playoff environment, actually?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think I said this yesterday. It's not Oklahoma playoff environment. But I think just as far as like media and like all the outside noise surroundings games, I think is a big deal. I think a lot of the best teams can kind of separate what's going on in the media to actually like play basketball.

I think that's what I'm saying when I mean it because it's very hard, if not impossible, to actually replicate, you know, wearing the same jersey throughout the whole entire arena like Oklahoma does.

Q. Do you like that it's in Vegas? Do you mind that it's in Vegas?

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JALEN WILLIAMS: I think it's good. I think, obviously the NBA is trying to have a team here. So I think the crowd's been pretty cool.

But yeah, Vegas, I think can have an NBA team. I think it's cool that it's like a little test run into how successful it would be.

Q. Are you a Vegas man?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I'm not. I'm not at all. I've been coming here since I was like six for AAU tournaments and stuff. So I've been here forever. I'm not the biggest fan. Too much stuff going on.

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