

Emirates NBA Cup

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

Milwaukee Bucks

Giannis Antetokounmpo

Championship Postgame



Milwaukee Bucks 97, Oklahoma City Thunder 81

Q. You have done some winning at the biggest levels in your career. Of course with the Finals. You've had a number of MVPs, both regular season and in the Finals. You seem to be in a pretty good mood. How cool is this now that you've won an NBA Cup?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's the best feeling ever. Just winning. Winning feels good. Playing big games, feels good when you're able to come to the game and execute your game plan, and then the outcome is exactly what you want it to be.

But it's not only about the game. It's about everything leading up to the game. The way you prep your body. The anxiety you feel that you want to get everything over with, let's go straight to the game. All those feelings leading up to the game. It's what makes the win even better.

So proud of the group. Everybody was extremely locked in. We came in, we were focused and played great basketball, and we were able to win this game. We had this goal as a team, and we accomplished it. We accomplished it. I'm very proud of everybody. I'm so happy for Dame that we got our first trophy together. This is just the beginning. We have to keep on improving and getting better, and we will be better.

Q. The first thing after you finish the game before the ceremony is walk to your brother and give him a t-shirt and a hat. What does it mean to have you are why brother right here and sharing this moment with him?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Yeah, I'm happy. My kids weren't able to be here. My mom is at almost every game. My wife, almost every game. They weren't able to be here. Only Thanasis was here and my sister-in-law.

So yeah, from where we started to where we are, I'm extremely happy. I'm proud of the journey. I don't take no moment for granted. I just have to embrace my brother and celebrate him. He's been supporting me since day one, not just in my basketball career, but as a brother.

He's always been there for me. In all the high-pressure moments, all the tough moments, difficult moments, he's always there for me no matter the outcome.

So I have to embrace my brother. I love him to death.

Q. You know, even though Vegas obviously doesn't have an NBA team, a lot of NBA fans here. How would you describe your experience of playing and competing here?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's fun. It's fun playing in Vegas. It's my second year of playing in Vegas. I've played a couple of Summer League games, maybe ten years ago here in Vegas. The atmosphere is incredible. I think the atmosphere in the game tonight was also very, very fun.

I can't wait -- I think in probably one or two, three years, there's going to be a team in Vegas, so we're probably going to come here more often. For sure, we're going to come here for the NBA Cup moving forward. Coming here, competing in Vegas, for me it's fun because I don't leave my room. For others, it might be a little bit of a distraction. But I have fun. The weather is good. People are great. I'm able to get some In-N-Out Burger whenever I come here.

So I love it. I love it. I have some great memories here.

Q. How much do you look at the MVP honor as what the best player gets versus looking at it maybe as what the leader of the winning team gets?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: At the end of the day, when you approach a game like this, you're not thinking about MVPs. You're thinking about trying to win the game, and sometimes when you try to win the game and try to do whatever it takes, you put yourself in position to be successful and you're able to get a trophy like that.

But yeah, I don't know. I don't know if they always -- the best player on the team gets the MVP trophy. In the history of the game, I don't think it's always been the case. But I think it's the guy that is able to lead in the series, or in that game, their team to victory.



So I don't know. I don't know why I got the MVP. I'm happy that I got it. I don't take it for granted. I'm most happy we got to win the game. Some of my teammates got life-changing money. We had this joke within the team about our two-way guy, Liam (Robbins), that I promised him from the first Cup game, I promised him, I said we're going to go all the way and we're going to get you a house in Iowa. So after every game, I'm like, hey, one step closer to your house in Iowa.

After the game, I went to the locker room and I saw smiles on their face. For me, as I was saying before the game and halftime, the money does not matter to me. It never mattered. If money mattered to me, I wouldn't be who I am. I wouldn't keep on pushing myself to the limit to improve every single year.

But I understand that this is life-changing money to people. I'm happy that we're able to give that to a lot of players within our team, and not just players -- coaching staff, physios and people that helped us to win this trophy.

But this is a great moment for the team. This is a great moment for us individuals that we're able to win the second NBA Cup trophy. This is a moment in time that, last year we came here and we had a bad taste in our mouth and this year we came here and we're more improved, more composed. We played more team basketball and we're more humble.

So I'm just happy that the outcome of this trip, it's a good outcome. But we have to stay humble. We have a lot of basketball front of us, and hopefully we can win the next trophy.

Q. You mentioned the job is done after the game. What does this win mean to your team going into the remainder of the season?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I feel like it means we have what it takes to compete with the best teams. Like OKC is one of the best teams in the West. But we have to stay humble. We have to stay humble. The last 15 games we've been competing. We've been playing team basketball. We've been setting the table for our teammates to be successful. Down the stretch, we played great basketball. We get open shots. Our defense has been better. The first ten games of the season we were the worst defensive team in the NBA, and now I think we are top 10 in the NBA. We hold a team that scored 100-plus points in all the games they have played to 80. We are getting better. I think with more time under our belt, we're going to keep on improving as a team. We have to improve as a team.

We have a chance to go deep into the playoffs, but we have to stay healthy. Today we didn't have one of our best players, best decision-maker, best shot-maker, great incredible IQ. He wasn't available for the game. So there's a level to us that we haven't still tapped.

We have just got to stay humble, keep on improving. We have a lot of basketball front of us. I think we play Cleveland on Friday. Very, very good team. They are going to be waiting for us. Right now, the emotion is at an all-time high. We have to bring it down, be humble. Once we leave here tomorrow, go back to the gym, lock in and hopefully we can go and get a win against the Cavs.

Q. There's a pass you make to Gary Trent Jr. in the fourth and you don't get the assist. Ends up being a hockey assist for you. How much have you enjoyed kind of dictating games from the elbow and the post? Doc said we made sure we were going to get Giannis the ball at the elbow to start the game. How much have you enjoyed that process this season?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I'll be honest with you, in the beginning, I've never initiated my offense from the elbow or from the high post. Usually it's transition or screen and roll. So it was kind of a weird transition.

I had the conversation with Doc. He told me that you can be very, very effective when you're at the elbow. You're under the wall. It's very hard for people to show a crowd, and when people show a crowd, it's easier for you to make that pass and you're one step closer to the basket.

This whole summer I was working on that. And it's not only about scoring. There's levels to it. Sometimes you can facilitate. You can make the hockey assist to GT for the open three. You can create shots for yourself. You can get to the free throw line. I think it allowed me to be a little bit more effective down there and allows me to help my teammates be great.

It's something new for me. I've played in the elbow for 25 games. I think I will stay there for the rest of my career because I'm getting better. I'm getting better at it.

Q. We saw you celebrating on the court with the trophies, but there's a room back there with champagne and nobody drank it. The bottles are still in the boxes. Someone back there said it it's because you guys are superstitious or something to do with other goals you have. Can you explain why you guys didn't pop champagne and go crazy?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I don't drink. Last time I

drink a little bit of champagne, when we won the (NBA) championship, I had like a full-body cramp (laughter), so I try to stay away from it.

I don't know who is superstitious. I don't know. I think the champagne should be in the locker room. Guys should celebrate this. You never know if you're going to be on this stage again.

But for sure we're going to have a form of celebration. I don't know what it's going to be. Probably might have -- guys will go to dinner. Some guys might spend some time with their family. Some guys might -- I don't know, go out with their friends or whatever the case might be. But there have to be. There have to be. This has been a great trip. This has been a trip that for six days, everybody has been locked in. Locked in, on time in the film session, so focused on the walk-throughs. At practice, we are able to be so sharp.

Yeah, we have a few hours until tomorrow to be loose a little bit with our family, which I definitely recommend and I would advise to all of my teammates. Not just my teammates -- the coaching staff and the physios, everybody that's part of the organization. They work extremely hard for us to be healthy and go and perform. All of them need a glass of wine and a good steak or chicken or fish, whatever they choose. Because we can take a break, a breather now. On Friday, we have one of the best teams in the NBA to play against. So we'll have to be ready.

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