

Emirates NBA Cup

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New York Knicks

Jalen Brunson

Championship Practice Day



Q. Jalen, both semifinal games the other day were very competitive. How much do you think the NBA layering in multiple days of rest has led to the high level of competition?

JALEN BRUNSON: I think it helps and obviously gets the East Coast teams adjusted a little bit, too.

But yeah, it was very competitive. It's a credit to the teams that are playing, as well. Guys are going out there and competing, wanting to win, trying to give their team the best opportunity to do so.

It's a credit to the teams, as well.

Q. Just wanted to see what your initial reactions were when Mike got the job as the head coach, and also, a couple months in now, what kind of impression has he made on this team?

JALEN BRUNSON: Yeah, I was very excited when Mike got the job. First thing we did is he called me, and we went to dinner and talked for like two, three hours. Not really talking about anything basketball-wise, X's and O's or Knicks-wise; we were just talking. I really appreciated the time he spent coming down to see me. It was great. It was a great first impression.

Since then, our relationship has grown. Our communication is great, the way we talk about things. Haven't really had any negative conversations or anything like that, but he's been great. The way he's holding all of us accountable, pushing us, it's something that we need from him, and we're really thankful for him.

Q. Wemby at his size and length, he's obviously one of the best shot blockers in the league. How do you counter that, and how cognizant do you have to be of that when you drive into the lane?

JALEN BRUNSON: Yeah, you've got to find ways to pull him away from the basket, and you've got to obviously be smart. You can't just go in there and think no one is going to come and affect the shot.

He's great at what he does, and we've just got to be smart as a team, playing off two feet and reading where he is and just trying to get the best shot as possible.

Q. I know you've talked about one thing that you really like about the Cup is the opportunity for teammates who don't make as much as some guys and coaches to be able to have some type of financial success with that. To my knowledge, I think it's the coaches and the players; I don't know if the peripheral people get any money. But if they don't, do you and some of the guys that have been fortunate in this league talk about how to share the wealth with everybody that's part of the organization, not just the people that get the money?

JALEN BRUNSON: Yes, we have. Thanks for ruining the surprise.

Q. Outside of the money and the surprise and all of that good stuff, what's it like going into a game that you're going into it 18-7 and you're going to come out of it 18-7? What is that element like when it doesn't count in the standings, it just counts for the trophy and prestige and a check? What is that like?

JALEN BRUNSON: You treat it like a regular game. You treat it like you would any other game, honestly.

Yeah, that is what's at stake. You're not winning or gaining anything in your record, but you're going out there and competing. You're playing for more than just yourself. You're playing for your team, your organization and your city.

There's a lot at stake besides the record. You go out there and compete no matter what.

Q. So much conversation going into the season about the level of play in the East, level of play in the West. Now that you've about a third of the way through the season, where do you see the two conferences stacking up?

JALEN BRUNSON: Yeah, I think when you're playing in one conference versus the other, obviously you're going to



have a little bit of bias. But it's great basketball. On any given night, someone can beat anybody, regardless of who you're playing.

The West, obviously they have great teams. What they've been able to do obviously since I've been alive, it's been a lot of West-dominated teams.

But the conversation about the East being wide open, I'm not a fan of that. I think there's too many great teams and great players. Regardless of who's out, they're still competing. You don't take anyone lightly. You don't take anyone for granted. You go out there and do what you've got to do every single night.

The East is a lot better than people think, and it's a grind every night.

Q. This is the biggest Knicks-Spurs game since the '99 Finals. Could you name the starting lineup for the Knicks back in '99 when they were in the Finals versus the Spurs?

JALEN BRUNSON: Not Rick Brunson. He was coming off the bench. Patrick Ewing --

Q. No, injured.

JALEN BRUNSON: Oh, he was injured.

Q. Who filled in for him? I'll be impressed.

JALEN BRUNSON: Was Chris Dudley starting?

Q. No. Coming off the bench.

JALEN BRUNSON: All right. I'm going to go Allan Houston, Latrell, Camby.

Q. Bang, two more.

JALEN BRUNSON: Who did I say? I said Allan Houston, said Latrell. Larry Johnson?

Q. At the 4. And point guard, round it out. You got this.

JALEN BRUNSON: Was it Chris Childs?

Q. No, coming off the bench, too. I'll give you a hint if you need it.

JALEN BRUNSON: Give me a hint.

Q. He was a former Heisman trophy winner.

JALEN BRUNSON: Charlie Ward. Dammit.

Q. Jalen, it's pretty obvious the bond that you and Josh have together. When he was struggling early in the season with the injury and Mike getting to know him, what role did you take maybe as a friend, as a teammate, maybe to encourage him if you did, because once he's gotten back in the starting lineup, that's when you guys have taken off.

JALEN BRUNSON: Yeah, unfortunately me and Josh talk every day. But at the same time, everyone thinks it's all jokes and laughter, but there's times we actually have serious talks, and there's times he picks me up when I need it, and then I do the same. The way he's able to control his mind when he's on the court and when he's working by himself and no one is watching, getting his confidence back and doing all that, a lot of people don't see that.

He's very nonchalant about who he is and what he does when it comes to the team, but he's an unbelievable worker, and he truly just wants to win. He's one of the biggest competitors I've ever met. He may not like to practice, but he will compete to the fullest level.

My role is just to be there as a friend, obviously, when things aren't going great, but continuing to push him knowing that he is who he is for a reason. He's in this position for a reason, so go out there and do what you've got to do.

At some point, he got it, and we're very happy for him, and we need him to continue to play at that level.

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