

Emirates NBA Cup

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San Antonio Spurs

De'Aaron Fox

Championship Practice Day



Q. What's your take on how much experience a team needs to get to be considered a real contender? Do they need playoff experience, for example? What do you think a team needs to do to really actually be a contender for a championship in this league?

DE'AARON FOX: Yeah, I definitely think you need some playoff experience. I don't know the last time a team has gone from not making the Playoffs and then winning a championship the next year.

For us, we know that this is a process, though. We're going day by day, step by step to try to win a championship.

If we can do it this year, that would be fantastic, make history. But like I said, we know this is a long process. We're continuing to get better. Some would say we're a little bit ahead of schedule, but I think we're right where we need to be.

Q. Dylan Harper has an amazing family heritage when it comes to basketball, mom and dad. How do you see that every day on and off the court as a mentor to him yourself?

DE'AARON FOX: Definitely on the court, like, a 19-year-old, just the feel that he has for the game, you can just tell that someone was teaching him how to play basketball. I don't know if it was his dad, his mom is big in basketball. But you really see his feel for the game that just not a lot of 19-year-olds have.

But he's a pro. I don't know how many rookies, besides I would say like Luka and Paolo and Donovan, Jayson that came in the league and is just able to affect the game the way he does, and I think he does it on both ends of the court. I don't think he gets enough credit for what he does defensively, but he's been fantastic for us in basically every game that he's played.

Q. De'Aaron, to piggyback, you picked San Antonio; you wanted to be here. Are you as an organization ahead of where you thought the Spurs would be at this

point?

DE'AARON FOX: I don't know if I would -- I don't think so because, I mean, I thought Steph would take a leap. We thought Vic would take a leap. Then I felt like me being here, knowing the foundation and knowing everything that I know at the beginning of the season, I felt like we were going to be good from day one.

Obviously coming in last year, you're trying to learn as many plays as you can in two days before you have to get out there and play, and then obviously injuries hit us, as well. Injuries have hit us this year, as well, but signing Luke and drafting Dylan and all the things that we've done outside of what we had coming in this year have made us a much better team. I wouldn't really say that I'm surprised that we are where we are.

Q. I know you said playoff experience is a part of getting to a championship, but where does an experience like the Cup sort of fall in that more than regular season, not quite official postseason? Where does this experience fall in terms of you guys building equity?

DE'AARON FOX: Well, OKC won the Cup last year or did they lose in the Finals? I think they lost in the Finals. And then Milwaukee. These are teams that have won championships in the last five years. Some would say history says that getting here is pretty damn good. The Lakers, I think, won, and obviously they won in 2020 or whatever it was. The last five years they've won a championship.

I think history is kind of showing that if you can make it to this Cup, then you can win a championship.

Obviously, it's much different being in a win-or-lose, win-or-go-home, but at the end of the day, I think just being able to play in big games does help toward the end of the season.

Q. Back before the season started, we were kind of asking all you guys when you would do your press conferences what's your goal for the season. I don't know if you did one because you were hurt at that

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time, but everybody was saying, we want to make the Playoffs. I think Vic was the one that said 6-seed. That looks almost in your rear view as you're playing at this point. What was your goal heading into the season and has that changed and what are you thinking about at this point?

DE'AARON FOX: Whenever we talked about it everyone was saying Playoffs and HB actually came in and he's like, what does that mean; does that mean get the eighth seed and lose in the first round? Is that a successful season? Does that mean going to the Conference Finals and losing? What does that mean?

I think as a team we're still figuring that out. Obviously, we want to play in the Playoffs. We want to put ourselves in a position to win a championship. Obviously, that's always a goal.

How many teams are true contenders? Most would say three, maybe a fourth team. But for us, we're just, like I said, going day by day. We know with the talent that we have in our locker room that we are a playoff team, yes, but we have to continue to do the little things that help us become a contender.

Q. De'Aaron, you've faced the Knicks, and Mike Brown is the coach, but how do you guard a player like Jalen Brunson? What's your mindset about that?

DE'AARON FOX: Just with that team, this is a team that's been in the Conference Finals last year. Obviously, this is one of the best teams in the league and this is a team that's trying to win a championship.

With JB, you don't just stop Jalen. Obviously, people can talk about his size or whatever it may be, but I've been playing Jalen since high school, and he's been this type of player his entire career. But you just try to slow him down. Him and KAT are obviously the focal points of that offense. You try to put size on him. You try to make him work, both offensively and defensively.

Other than that, we focus on what we're doing. We go out, we try to get deflections. We try to turn teams over. We try to play fast. We always focus on ourselves first and then we worry about what the other team does because if we do what we know we can do, we always put ourselves in position to at least be able to win a game.

Q. Just so you know, the '22 Warriors and the Bubble Lakers were the last two to win it without going to the Playoffs the year before, so it can be done.

DE'AARON FOX: The Warriors one doesn't count, though.

If we go through the roster of the year before, that doesn't count.

Q. Everyone knows it wasn't just a game the other night. What was that process like coming down kind of off that and getting locked back in on this one after you win a game that way, on that stage with all that attention?

DE'AARON FOX: I mean, like I said, you want as many of those games as possible, and I think that's what the NBA was trying to do. Obviously, they want to make the regular season mean something. I think it's been great because some people don't think that it's good, but I think it's been great. I think it makes games have more meaning, and you feel it from the Playoffs to the coaching staff.

Like I said, those are the things that help you build towards the end of the year because when you have a team that hasn't played in the Playoffs and then you get that first playoff game and the intensity, how it changes, it can hit you like a truck. It can hit you like a truck because you haven't felt that before.

Being able to have this, obviously it's not going to be the exact same, but you get a little glimpse of what it could be like playing in the Playoffs and the different officiating. No matter how much they say they don't officiate the games differently in the Playoffs, we all have eyes and we can see it. But being able to play in as many of those games, it definitely helps you come playoff time.

Q. Have you seen over the last few years of this event existing, have you seen players be more and more interested in seeing it as something different and something to strive for?

DE'AARON FOX: 1,000 percent. At first it was confusing to some people. I don't know why it was confusing; it's pretty straightforward to me.

But yeah, I mean, people like money. It is what it is. That's life. People want to play for something.

In our locker room with the two-ways and everything, people want to win this. You can go into any locker room, if someone says they don't want to win it, they're lying.

But like I say, it gives you something to play for. It's fun being able to go out into an environment like this and try to win a prize like that. You continue to make history, regardless of what type of championship it is. You insert your name in history. Obviously, the goal for everybody is to win an NBA championship, like I think the last couple years this has been a step towards it.



Q. That story you told earlier about Harrison asking what does it mean to be a playoff team, be an 8 seed and lose in the first round, I know you said you're still figuring that out as a team, but in the moment how do you think guys reacted to that question?

DE'AARON FOX: I mean, like if you're watching an animated show, you have a question mark on top of people's heads. I think he kind of shocked guys whenever he said that because whenever you're thinking about your goal, you're not thinking -- there's like a very -- you could be the 1 seed; if you lose in the first round, that is obviously a disappointing season. If you're the 8 seed and you lose in the first round, it might not be as disappointing because you probably weren't really a true contender.

He's just saying what do we really want. Like are you okay with being the fourth seed, going and then getting swept? Yeah, we were a playoff team, but I don't think anybody in the locker room would be like, yeah, we had a successful season because we went in the Playoffs and then just got steamrolled. I think he was just challenging guys.

That's been what HB has provided for us. Obviously, he's been a player that's been on a championship team and been to multiple Finals. Hearing that from him I think definitely put a battery on guys' back because now once he asked that, I think guys realized they didn't just want to be a playoff team. We want to go in and we want to make a statement. We want to be one of those teams trying to compete for a championship.

Him saying that -- and this was before the season even started. I think that kind of fueled what we have going, and obviously we've had a lot of guys in and out of the rotation, and I think it's done nothing but help us.

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