

NBA All-Star Rising Stars Practice

Friday, February 16, 2024
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Team Jalen Chet Holmgren Press Conference



Q. Hi, Chet. If you could select a player from the '90s to play against, who would you choose?

CHET HOLMGREN: I mean, it's got to be MJ, I guess. I mean, he was the best.

Q. Bit of a lighter question here, but if you had to form a WWE-style tag team with any other NBA All-Star, who would you pick as your teammate and why?

CHET HOLMGREN: I wasn't ready for these questions.

(Laughter). Probably like Embiid or somebody, just because he's huge.

Q. Size, charisma on the mic?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, probably would help with a WWE match.

Q. I don't know how to follow that one, I'm sorry. I hate asking the "people say" questions, but do you think you guys are still a surprise? Just the way you're playing, how high you are in the West, and how excited are you for what's coming here these last 25 games when you have a chance to do something pretty cool obviously?

CHET HOLMGREN: I'd say we surprised people who weren't paying close attention. Obviously we're in a small market and everything, so we don't have the constant daily national media attention that some teams have around them. But the diehard fans who really watch us could see the talent that we've had for the last couple years.

It was only a matter of time before we figured out how to make that equate into wins. I'm just thankful to be out here with the group of guys that we've got, trying to win games. We've all bought into the winning mindset and doing what it takes to win. So far, it's been showing.

Q. A two-parter for you. First of all, how does it feel to be here and be experiencing all of this? And on top of that, knowing the competitor you are, how does it feel knowing the team success that you guys have built so far this season, kind of being a part of why you're here?

CHET HOLMGREN: First of all, it's a blessing to be here. I'm completely grateful. I don't take any of it for granted, especially knowing it can be taken away at any time.

What's really respected in this league is winning. It doesn't matter what you do, if you never win at the same time. That's always on the forefront of my mind.

With the group of guys we've got, if anybody is not focused on winning, it's kind of an outlier in our locker room. I'm not going to be that guy who is kind of pulling away from what we're trying to do. It's showing in the win column. We know we've got a long ways to go.

It's always good to be able to look back on what we've done so far in the season with kind of a natural break we're having with All-Star break. But there's still been a lot of lessons that we've still got to learn from.

Q. I wanted to talk to you about KD. You were a part of that group of young guys that worked out with him. One thing that really stuck out to me, you asked Adam (Harrington), what time is he going to be in? And you got there an hour early before the workout. Talk about what you learned from him and also being early and being one of the first ones in the gym, because that really stuck out to me when you did that.

CHET HOLMGREN: I don't know, I just always show up early to things, I guess. Part of it's also like I'm young, and I didn't grow up in L.A. When you're driving out there, you've kind of got to take into account there might be two hours of traffic. So just in case, I always leave a lot of room there just in case.

When I don't hit traffic, I end up there an hour early, which is all cool with me. I'm cool sitting in the gym all day shooting, doing what I got to do before the workout actually



starts or the pickup or whatever.

Shout-out to Adam and Kev and his people allowing me to come get some good work in. It's always appreciated. I don't think it stopped with last summer.

Q. When you did the pivots, like the spin pivots, I know that's something that happens in Adam's workouts. What is something you learned from that? I know people think it's flashy, but it really works with your pivots and your balance, and I've seen you work on that a lot.

CHET HOLMGREN: One of the big things is the balance and the foundation going into your shot. It really helped me work on that. Especially after missing a whole year, I kind of lost kind of the game feel for shooting. I think at Summer League I was 1-for-8 from three. I just stopped shooting them because they just weren't going in.

That was a big emphasis this summer, figuring out how to get my shot back to where it had been in the past and even better. That was a big part of it. I got to work on my shot kind of from the ground up, and when I got back to OKC, I kind of just continued that work all the way up to this point.

Q. There's been a lot of attention of the matchup, Chet versus Wemby, Wemby versus Chet. You played him a couple times now. What's your takeaway from the matchup, and what do you think of him as a competitor?

CHET HOLMGREN: He's a high-level competitor. You can see that in how hard he plays and the emotion that he plays with. He's a really good basketball player, too, so it's always fun to go up against players that are not only really good but play really hard. It really brings the best out of you.

Q. You might play against Victor Wembanyama this weekend. Are you excited to play against him like he is to play against you?

CHET HOLMGREN: Always. Like I just said, it's always great to play against players that are really good and also play hard and have a lot of talent. It brings the best out of you and makes you better and really makes you compete.

I'm excited to play against him, but also all the other guys that are in this Rising Stars thing. There's a lot of talent across the board.

Q. If you are fortunate enough to play in the Sunday game at some point in your career, what do you think you and your other peers, up-and-coming players in

this league can do to make that game maybe what it used to be, more competitive versus more like an exhibition?

CHET HOLMGREN: I think it's always been an exhibition. If you really go back and watch some of those highlights, there's not a whole lot of defense until the fourth quarter in those ones. But it just comes down to competing. I think last year there was some great moments between, I think (Jayson) Tatum and (Jaylen) Brown where they're going back and forth with each other, just competing.

I mean, it's friendly. At the end of the day, obviously nobody wants to have anything bad happen in terms of injuries or anything during the All-Star Game. But I think it just comes down to competing and having fun with it at the same time.

A lot of guys are friends with each other from being in the league and seeing each other all over the place, growing up playing basketball. If guys have a little friendly competition and go back and forth, I think that would be great for the game.

Q. Just a broader question tapping into your basketball knowledge. When you hear the name Wilt Chamberlain, what comes to mind?

CHET HOLMGREN: I guess dominance and stats. Yeah, put up a lot of stats.

Q. Is there a specific move from another player in the NBA that you've either added to your game or you're looking to add to your game?

CHET HOLMGREN: I'd say my post fade. I added it to my game a while back. I've had it in my game. It's a good shot for me. I feel like I should just get to it more.

Q. Who's been your most challenging big man matchup this year? And what was like your "welcome to the NBA" moment?

CHET HOLMGREN: For the first question, that's kind of complicated. On which side of the floor, offense or defense?

Q. You were on defense.

CHET HOLMGREN: I was on defense? I'd probably say like Embiid.

And then "welcome to the NBA" moment, I mean, there's been a lot of good moments and a lot of bad moments this year, just like for anybody in the NBA. But I'd probably say



(Andre) Drummond stripping me and making me fall on the same play. First game in the league, too.

Q. When you see your career so far, I know you got hurt the first year, and now this is the second year, how are you coming along physically, and where do you see yourself playing what position in terms of how you're going to develop your body? And the second question is what is your most precious goal as a basketball player?

CHET HOLMGREN: First, I feel like I'm coming along great. Physically I've been blessed with enough luck, and I've worked hard enough to play in all 54 games so far this year. Obviously, last year I missed all 82 with kind of, I guess you could say a freak injury. I put a lot of work into my body and making sure that I'm in the right shape and strong enough, et cetera, to kind of deal with the night in, night out banging of the NBA.

I feel like I've done a great job of that so far. Shout-out to our medical staff, too, for helping me in between games, get ready for the next one.

God willing, it would be great to play in all 82 games this year. That's definitely one of my goals this year is to play in every single game.

Then what was your second one?

Q. The precious moment, your entire career, the one you said, "I can't believe I just did this."

CHET HOLMGREN: "I can't believe I just did this." I mean, getting into the NBA, being drafted, shaking Adam Silver's hand and finally playing in my first game. Obviously, there was a lot of time in between that, but those two moments were huge for me.

I also understood that's just the beginning. Got a long ways to go from there, a lot of work to put in, but it's a good stepping stone along the way, I guess.

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