

LA Clippers Media Conference

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Serge Ibaka

Press Conference



Q. The other day we talked to Ty and he told us it was your decision to go to the G-League; can you take me through why you thought that would be the best course of action for you to ramp up?

SERGE IBAKA: As a player I've been in the game for 13 years. I've done a lot of things. One of the things is the most important as a player, you have to play. I don't care how hard you work because I did everything I was supposed to do all summer long to get myself ready, in shape, stronger, healthier. That's why I feel like only thing I've missed is to play really, to play basketball.

It was a good way for me to get my self-confidence, too, to get myself -- in this league you have to go get what's yours. You have to go get what you want to because nobody is going to feel sorry about you. Nobody is going to feel sorry if I missed eight months didn't play basketball, nobody is going to care. People want you when you step on the court, you have to be ready to play, to perform 100 percent, and they don't care. You've got back surgery or you missed to play for 10 months, they don't care. Nobody feel sorry about you.

You have to care about yourself first and you have to try to do the best you can to go find your confidence because nobody going to give you confidence if you're going to get it. Nobody. I felt like this was the way for me personally to good get some rhythm and also get some confidence in my game and come back ready.

Q. Obviously you're playing with Zu and Isaiah. I think you played two games. What was it that you felt like -- were those minutes just not enough for you? Did you feel like you needed more consistent minutes to ramp up? What was it about the NBA minutes that you felt like --

SERGE IBAKA: As a player after like eight or ten months I didn't play basketball. You need to play, so coming back for me from injury, trying to get back my rhythms and playing five minutes, I knew it's not going to help me. I

really knew it's not going to help me. It's just going to make the process longer and longer. I don't want to wait longer.

At the same time I understand the team is playing good, and it's just hard for me just to come from injuries when I didn't play to try to come back and try to get minutes there. I had to work my way up there. That's why I felt like -- and playing five minutes is not going to help myself to get where I want to be to be able to help my team.

That's why I decided to go to the G-League where I know I'm going to be ready, I'm going to come back. Whatever minutes they're going to give me I want to do something with.

Q. How have these past few G-League games been? Have they been helpful? How have you felt?

SERGE IBAKA: Yeah, it really personally helped myself. It helped me just to see situations. Actually one of the bigger reasons I decided to go to play the G-League was reading this book, it's called "Ego is the Enemy." I don't know if you know that book. That really -- that's one of the biggest reasons why I decide myself to go out there to play some time. As a player I've been in the league for 13 years and I've never been in the G-League before.

I could just wait. I could just wait and play the five minutes I was getting and try to figure it out, but that book has really helped me to take that decision to go play in the G-League, and it'll be fine.

There's nothing like playing basketball. The good thing about it is I'm playing with a lot of young guys out there. Just being able to be out there helping them, communicate with them, it's fun. It's like another experience I'm learning, too, and to be patient, too, because those guys, they don't -- they're still young. They still have a lot to learn about playing basketball, so it forced me to be patient at the same time, to work harder. It's just a great experience.

Q. Do you feel like your legs are under you a little bit better?

SERGE IBAKA: I'm good now, yeah. That's all I needed.



Q. Do you expect that we'll see you back with the big Clippers?

SERGE IBAKA: Yes. Yes. I want to play one more game with the young fellas tomorrow and then from there I will be back with the team.

Q. What you're doing here is very unique; a lot of NBA players don't choose to go play in the G-League. Do you think that other players could find value in doing what you're doing?

SERGE IBAKA: I think so. If it helps. Sometimes as a player we think about what people think about us or what people say. Also it's kind of funny I saw some comment people making fun of me. They don't understand. So it's okay, they don't understand. It's about life sometimes, and those kind of things is important than just play a game.

Yeah, I think a lot of players can use this example in that situation if you sit out for long. At least if you Kawhi or Kevin Durant or Stephen Curry, those kind of guys they can sit for three years and they're going to come back, they're going to give them minutes, they're going to give them -- they're going to try to get them their confidence. At least if you are one of those guys, you can stay, but if you're not one of those guys, one of those names out there, sometimes you have to work for yourself to go get your confidence because nobody is going to give you that.

If I were Kevin Durant I can sit out for two years and come back and I will play. If you're Serge Ibaka you have to work your way. Nobody is going to give you shit.

It's been like this since my first day in the league, and that's one reason I'm still in the league after 13 years, because it helped me, pushed me to work hard.

Q. You mentioned some of the things that you're helping yourself with, like being patient and being, I guess, a better leader to the younger guys. What are you learning from them, playing with these younger players?

SERGE IBAKA: Just like playing with the young guys, only thing it makes me realize, I used to be like them, too, young, didn't really know, understand the game like that. It took me time.

It's like, watching those guys, playing with those guys, yeah, those guys have a lot of talent, so yeah, it's a good participation with them, help them to grow. It's fun working with those guys, and they want to learn. They listen to you. As a vet, it just makes me -- I'm enjoying doing that, actually.

Q. I'm curious, you talked about how it seemed like this was a big step for you to sort of put your pride aside and go play in the G-League. Last year if this had been an option, if there had been a longer G-League season, were you in the condition to try something like this? Were you physically in a condition where this would have been an option for you to go down to the G-League if the G-League had played a longer season?

SERGE IBAKA: You know, I didn't plan everything. Somethings you have to realize things change, situations change. You have to try to adapt it. You can't always live the way you want to. Sometimes you wake up the next day, things may change or your mindset may change. You have to try to adapt it and try to make sure you do whatever makes you feel good. Mentally is the most important because like I say, I worked so hard all summer long. I did what I was supposed to do, and mentally to be in the right place, to have the joy of playing basketball again and the confidence, I think as a player, that's the most important.

People are different. Like me personally, I will do whatever it takes first, most important, to feel good before anything.

Q. When you come back, does it matter what your role is to the big club?

SERGE IBAKA: I don't know. I don't know what my role is, but the one thing I know is those games I played with the G-League really helped me, and I'm ready. So when I'm coming back, I'm coming back.

Q. You mentioned the young guys and you enjoyed sort of mentoring them this little stint here. Can I ask you specifically about Brandon and sort of what you've seen from him?

SERGE IBAKA: Yeah, Brandon has a lot of future. That young man, really he's so talented. He's young, still young, still has to learn a lot about the game, but talent-wise, he's very talented, and he has a lot of future in front of him. Also the good thing about his playing, he's playing one of the best organizations, so I think he will be fine.

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