

LA Clippers Media Conference

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Kawhi Leonard

Press Conference

Q. Coach was just talking about maybe the most important thing for the club this year is health and stay healthy. What have you done during the off-season that can ensure that you will stay healthy, as healthy as you can, throughout the course of the regular season?

KAWHI LEONARD: Same thing I've been doing. Just got to make sure that we -- I don't know. Doesn't matter if you're going to trip on somebody. A lot of my injuries last year I stepped on somebody's foot or ran into somebody.

We've got to control what we can control and get the treatments that we can at the time, listen to your body, and keep moving and see what happens.

Q. Would love to hear your thoughts on the new NBA player participation policy.

KAWHI LEONARD: What are they?

Q. I know that you've gotten a lot of flak for load management and resting certain players in certain situations. Just would love to hear your thoughts on that.

KAWHI LEONARD: I just don't know the policy. What is the policy?

Q. I'll ask you a different question if that's okay. Just would love to know how you're feeling and if you did anything differently in the off-season that maybe you hadn't tried in previous off-seasons.

KAWHI LEONARD: I mean, you try different stuff every year. Every year is a new journey, every day. You do new things, but you've got to just keep going. There's nothing new that happens. You're either going to be hurt or you're just going to be lucky enough to play games throughout the Playoffs or the whole regular season.

With that being said, if you're not injured, people play



basketball, so nobody is just trying to get to a certain amount of games or -- well, at least me. I'm not trying to get to a certain amount of games. I'm trying to play the games that I can play. If I'm hurt, I can't play basketball.

The last two years have been unfortunate for me. I got hurt, tore my ACL, then at the end of the year tore my meniscus. It's just basketball. I'm a two-way player, play hard, so injuries are going to come up. I'm not out there just walking around. I play both ends of the floor. I see the best players on both ends every night. Either I'm guarding the best player or the best player is guarding me. Whatever happens with that, if injury comes, that's what happens. I'm in the NBA.

Q. In regards to the league policy, I think the gist of it is they want their top 50 stars out on the floor every night if possible. Given that, I'm just wondering if you feel an obligation to play every game?

KAWHI LEONARD: No. I mean, I'm not a guy that's sitting down because I'm doing a load management. When I was with the Raptors it was different. I was coming from an injury. You have to know the details of a doctor, but if the league is seeing or trying to mock what I did with the Raptors, then they should stop because I was injured that whole year.

But other than that, if I'm able to play, I play basketball. I work out every day in the summertime to play the game, not to sit and watch people play.

No league policy is helping me to play more games.

Q. If USA Basketball asks you, would you play in the Paris Olympics?

KAWHI LEONARD: Yeah, I wanted to play this summer, but I had other obligations and I would have had to leave early, so I wasn't able to go. We'll see what happens.

Q. I'm just curious if this summer was at all different for you coming off the rehab you had last year versus the rehab you had this year.

KAWHI LEONARD: It's totally different. ACL is whatever; you're tearing a ligament, and meniscus is a quick



clean-up, at least for me it was. It wasn't an eight-month process of trying to build leg strength or trying to build a tendon back.

It was more just getting swelling get out of the knee, and then you're pretty much good to go.

Q. Given some of the contract situations and seeing how long you guys have been together, do you feel like this is a championship or bust year? Do you allow yourself to put that kind of pressure? How are you approaching the season mentally?

KAWHI LEONARD: My goal is to try to win every year, so I'm not looking into what's being said. Whatever happens is going to happen. My focus is on the season, to win a championship, like it is every year.

Q. Last year coming in, I think we were all curious how long it would take you to kind of regain your form. Were you at all curious at that time? And now put yourself in this position, knowing how you played the last half of the season, so to speak, do you have more of a sense of what you're going to be able to do on the floor than you did maybe a year ago?

KAWHI LEONARD: I mean, I'm always confident in what I can do. It's all based on how I'm moving and how I'm feeling the next day.

Last year I started the season probably -- it went from starting, then starting and playing five-minute segments. Even if I started -- anybody healthy, if you start that, it's going to be up and down. It's going to be hard to find a rhythm.

Once I was able to get to those 30-plus minute marks or when I'm playing consistent minutes throughout the whole four quarters you start seeing the type of basketball I can play. But if I am coming in playing 15 minutes you're not going to see it because I'm not a guy that's going to come in and try to shoot 15 shots in 15 minutes. I'm going to try to win a game.

Some of those games I shot three times; some of those games I shot four times. So two, five points, you start seeing that consistently, oh, I don't know if he can play still. But once the 30 minutes came, the game laid out for itself.

Right now I feel the same way. If I'm able to -- if they're going to be starting me with 30 minutes you're going to be able to see me play.

Q. Because of the lineup flexibility with you guys, also like last season, a lot of forwards, a lot of guys who

can play the 2, 3 and 4, how do you view your position? Do you think of yourself still as a 3? Do you want to play a little bit more of the 4? Does it even matter to you at all?

KAWHI LEONARD: I don't know what position I've been playing since probably the last six, seven years. It's really a positionless league. Depending on your coach and how he wants his offense ran, then some coaches like their floor to bring up the ball with a point guard, sometimes a shooting guard is initiating the offense. It's really pretty much the best players today, just put them in the game and put guys around them and figure it out, who can help the best players' weaknesses out. I feel like that's where the NBA is at today.

Q. You had such a rushed introduction to play with Mason and Russ and Bones after the trade deadline last year for you guys. What do you feel like having a full training camp and a longer time to play with them will help you guys accomplish this year, especially Russ, having him in the starting lineup with yourself?

KAWHI LEONARD: When you bring those guys in late, I think obviously learning a new offense, defense, so it's team chemistry at that point, how quickly can you mesh with each other.

Pretty much the same thing now, but they're starting with us. They're coming through the whole process of learning our offense from day one. I think that's going to help out a lot, just having Russ here, backup point guard, and Bones, having two bigs to start the season is going to be great for us.

Last year we were up and down at that point guard position, and we only started the season with one big, so it was very tough. Then obviously with me playing inconsistent minutes early was very tough for the team.

Hopefully just having all the pieces that we need now and that we have, we can have a better start.

Q. Do you feel like with the players that you have right now that you guys can be one of the top teams on defense this year?

KAWHI LEONARD: Yeah. I mean, we should be holding ourselves accountable to that, being one of the top 5 defenses within the league once it's done. Defense wins us championships, so we've got to be on the same page if we want to be a top-tier team.

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