

LA Clippers Media Conference

Monday, October 2, 2023
Los Angeles, California, USA

Russell Westbrook

Press Conference



Q. You know how important you are to this team, and we've been talking all morning about their health. Is the health of you and the health of this team, are they the utmost part of your part as far as this club being successful, because you have the talent?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Yeah, I think more than anything, I think the important part is mentally, mentally staying strong. I think a lot of conversation around health, and to me that's unpredictable on many levels. I think the most important part is making sure mentally as a team and as a unit we're collectively together, have the same mindset, and make sure our mind is in the right place as we go into the year.

Q. This summer you had a lot going on as far as getting yourself ready from a skills standpoint to this season, workouts and everything. What were some of the things that you were doing this summer that you've never really done in previous summers to get ready for a season?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Nothing, to be honest. During the summer I work on every aspect of my game, just because I'm the type of player that can do pretty much everything on the floor. I kind of work on just tooling up the things that's gotten me here, trying to find ways to keep making the game moving more efficiently for myself, and not feeling great about how I ended the year just on that standpoint, and I just kind of led it into the summertime and just tuned up some things.

Q. Russ, obviously a lot to build off of last season. Health is the biggest thing, but how beneficial is it having a full training camp with these guys?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: It's great, man, just being able to have a fresh start and having everyone here, having the opportunity to be able to set the tone. It's important, especially for us as a group as we go into the season, and looking forward to it.

Q. Piggy-backing off of that, you came in late in the season, 20 games left; describe the impact that you think you can make. Is it a bigger impact now that you're going through a full training camp, that you can put your fingerprints on it and set the tone? Was it tough to come in 20 games left and make an impact that you could possibly make coming into a full training camp, full 82 games?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Tough, yeah, but at the same time, leadership is one of my biggest qualities. It's something that I really embrace and enjoy, something that I -- it's a part of who I am.

So being able to have a whole season, summer, to be able to do that, I'm looking forward to it, looking forward to learning more and more about the guys -- which I've learned a lot since the end of the year and going into the summer -- learning more about who they are, how they got here, their goals, their aspirations.

It's all important as a leader, and it's a trait that I look forward to, especially with the guys that are here.

Q. The summer Ty was saying that he commended you for taking less money to come back here, to a place that you wanted to play, and that you had options. Could you walk us through this, your first time being a free agent, the options that you had that you had to filter through and the priorities that led you back here?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Yeah, I mean, it was very easy and simple for me. Money is not never a driver for me in any aspect, honestly, and being in a place where I was welcomed with open arms and an organization that just welcomed not just myself but my family, which is most important to me, and I'm grateful for that, and a group of guys that I love being around, that I know.

Obviously Ty was great. I've known Ty for a while, as well. I've been able to be home with my kids, wife, my mom, my dad, all my friends and family is here. You can't get too much better than that.

I really enjoy being a dad, understand how important it is for my kids at their young age and understanding the

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

priorities of that, understanding just on a basketball front how it's hard to come by a good organization that's willing to kind of do and give you anything that you may need to be able to be successful, and being around guys that understand and value winning and know what it looks like. It was kind of a no-brainer for me.

Q. After the first round series last year, Coach Ty Lue spoke about how you bring so much more to this team than scoring, and you impact the game so many different ways. What does it do for a guy like yourself to get that much confidence from Ty Lue?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Yeah, it's great. Ty knows the game. Obviously he's played it, he understands it very well, one of the best coaches in this league, and being able to get acknowledgment from him on that just shows that, as I mentioned, scoring and -- you can impact the game and impact winning in different ways.

Sometimes it don't show up on the stat sheet, and that's one. Just finding ways to impact winning is something that I take pride in.

Q. You mentioned mentality being the most important thing. Can you say more about that? What does that mean specifically for this squad?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: I mean, the mentality is very important. You've got to be resilient. You have to be -- we've got to go out and compete. We have to make sure that we're being consistent, finding ways to have an identity, how we want to play.

Who we want to be to start the year is very important, and I think we all understand that, and I think we'll find that there will be ups and downs, there will be bad stretches, there will be great stretches, and that's all a part of this game and a part of the season.

It's what you do during those stretches as a team, whether you bring yourself closer and find ways to fight the adversity and become better find ways how you can conceive to get better as the season goes along.

Q. What would it mean to you to be able to add a title to a legacy like yours? How would that feel, especially here in LA?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Yeah, man, it would be an unbelievable attribute to add. It would be a blessing to be able to do something like that, especially being here in Los Angeles. It would be amazing to be able to do so.

Obviously I understand how hard that is, and figuring out

ways to do that, just making sure that we are collectively as a group going step by step collectively to make sure we can get to that goal.

Q. Ty has talked about how playing the right way was the most important thing, and then you guys can just live with the results no matter what they are. To you, what does that entail?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Every game is different. Every game -- I believe as a point guard, the game will tell you what to do. You can kind of see sometimes the game tells you or tells myself it's a passing night, sometimes you've got to be more aggressive, sometimes you've got to defend, do whatever you need to do to be able to win games and contribute.

It's my sort of doing the right thing, and I think that is what he is referring to, because every game can be different. We have so many guys on this team that can do so many things that are very, very talented. Sometimes it may be their night, sometimes it may be another guy's night, and that's great.

We want to make sure we're supporting whatever that may be and make sure we're doing the right things to win a basketball game.

Q. Paul has a podcast; your wife has a podcast. Are you next on the podcast game?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Honestly, podcasting with my wife was a no-brainer, but I haven't done a podcast probably ever other than my wife's. I don't know. I don't know as of right now.

Q. I asked Kawhi and Ty this, but year 16 for you, contract situations being what they are, is this a championship-or-bust year for you guys? How do you approach this season?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: I think every team comes into media day, training camp, we're going to win a championship, and we understand that's the goal. But personally the championship-or-bust mentality to me is just not a real thing. It's like a thing that people make up. Like winning a championship or bust. It's not true.

You can accomplish a lot more. You can create brotherhood. You can learn so much more about people. You can figure out ways how you can as a team, collectively -- there's just so many lessons that I've personally learned throughout a season, friends I've added, different things I've learned about cultures.



There's so many different aspects to this game with this platform that I don't personally believe that if you don't win a championship, it's a bust.

Q. The "too small" celebration has become way more popular around not only the NBA and basketball in general, but in other professional sports. I feel like you were one of the first guys to use that. I was wondering, what was your inspiration for it, maybe back even in 2018?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Honestly, from my position, I'm a bigger guy. I'm probably strong for my position. There's rarely nights where I don't see that people of my position guard me. It probably doesn't happen. So when they do, I make sure I punish them, and when I punish them, I let them know. That's all.

Q. This is a slow team. How do you get this team up and running at the pace you want to play at?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: We're going to run. We're going to run. That's all I'm going to tell you. We're going to run. We're going to run and go.

Q. We're going to run and we're not going to podcast.

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: I like that.

Q. Talk about what concerns you the most about the season and what impresses you the most about the season, especially with all of the movement that's going on with the teams that are making moves.

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: What I'm looking forward to most is just getting started, creating a rhythm, creating a groove, setting the mentality kind of where I want to be at, so I think we remember to do that, but we have like a standard where we know we're supposed to be playing at.

As far as concerns, I'm not really concerned about anybody else or what they're doing, other moves they're making. I always felt since I've been here, if we're all healthy we'll compete. There's not many teams that can beat us, and I still believe that, and I'm looking forward to getting started.

Q. People have mentioned your 16th season a couple times today. It feels like we're at a time when athletes are playing deeper into their careers, and a lot of your teammates say you have more energy than a lot of the younger guys on the team. Have you considered how long you would like to play?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: I don't have -- I'm still as fast as anybody, jump as high as anybody. I can play elite level. I

still see myself as an elite basketball player in this league. I can do pretty much anything, can guard the best.

Until I can't do that no more, then I guess that's what it'll be, but I don't know when that is. I'm super grateful and blessed to be able to play, and like I've always said, I don't take this game for granted by any means.

I'll play as long as I can, and obviously where God takes me.

Q. During the off-season, we heard a lot of guys across this league speak out in your defense, so how does it feel to be so respected amongst your peers?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: You know, it's important. I'm thankful for it. I'm thankful for the truth, to be honest. A lot of stuff that coming to my defense for is made-up rumors that have never been true or actually never happened. I think the important part is I'm grateful for guys just being truthful and standing up, and I don't take that for granted, whether it's my teammates, whether it's other guys that I've never encountered or that I've talked to. I'm grateful for that because it's important.

I've been in this league, as we mentioned, going into my 16th season -- it's important that we not let kind of like narratives creating change who people are because it can happen. It's unfortunate, but to me it's just sports in general, and I think it's important that if people know the truth and people understand and value friendships and who people actually are, it's important that they speak up, and I'm glad people did that on my behalf.

Q. You talked a lot about the reasons why you decided to come back, obviously family, the organization. How important was it to come back to the fan base that embraced you last year?

RUSSELL WESTBROOK: Yeah, I forgot to mention that in a couple of things, but I think it's very important, a couple reasons. The fans were amazing, great, and I'm looking forward to turning up again once the season starts back.

I think the next most important thing after just family and making sure that I'm able to come back is community. Being a part of this LA community, making sure that that is a big priority for me and making sure that I continue to instill and do things in our community that shows that we have support, impact, want to continue to inspire people, especially in the community of Los Angeles, knowing that I'm from here. So that's important.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports