

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Shai Gilgeous-Alexander Press Conference



Q. Sam has had a great track record when it comes to making moves. What are your thoughts on the future of this team?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, like you said, Sam does have a great track record and knows what he's doing, and I think myself and the rest of the guys and the rest of the world have seen so many guys on this team develop all year long, and I can go down the list -- to myself, to Poku, to Theo, to Moses, to Baz, to Lu, to Ty. We've seen guys step up and really get better at their craft all year long.

I think I said this at the beginning of the year, that's one of the biggest things we tried to focus on as a team, developing, trying to get better every day, and wherever that takes us, we'll be satisfied because we know we did all we can do.

Q. As a leader, as you look back at these past six months and all the things that you all had to go through, from the testing and lack of practice and shootarounds and all that stuff, what stands out to you about the way the group carried itself and the way you all handled this day-to-day?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I think that just speaks to the character of guys we've got in our locker room and in our building. High-character guys, do whatever it takes, do the right things. Coach said at the beginning of the year, the leader is the guy doing the right thing in the moment. It's not the best player, it's not the oldest guy in the room. Like I said, we've got a teamful of leaders and guys that do the right thing, day in and day out, guys with great attitudes, and I ultimately think we have guys that are grateful to be here. Obviously, we're in a great position being in the NBA, and that's the main culprit as to why we behave and act and do the things we do.

Q. How does the foot feel now, and what's the recovery process for you moving forward?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, the foot is

progressing. I feel a lot better than I did a month ago, two months ago. I feel like I'm getting better every day, so I'm satisfied with that.

Q. Do you plan to play for Team Canada this summer if you're healthy?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, if I'm a hundred percent healthy, yes, I do. But I guess that's the figuring out part I've got to do. Getting 100 percent healthy, first and foremost, before I do that. So it's not a no, it's not a yes. Me and my people still got to figure out timelines for when I'm there, and then from there we'll figure it out.

Q. How exciting is it for you as a primary scorer to watch Lu -- he averaged 24 points a game in April. What was it like watching that development, and how excited are you to work with him given his growth this season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, me and Lu are super close, like brothers, so I know what he's capable of. And me being out and not being able to be on the floor with him for that period of time, I just tried to help him in any way I could. You guys saw what he did with it. Obviously, a really good player, super hard worker, super high-character guy, and we always say, when you have those things, life works out for you, and you guys saw that for Lu this year. He got better in so many areas. He deserves it, and he works for it.

Q. You played on a playoff team as a rookie, then a playoff team last year. This year you guys were pretty competitive until you got hurt, but the last two months were pretty rough. Do you buy into any of the theories or concerns that extensive losing can be detrimental to a guy's development, either mentally or emotionally or any of those things?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: I didn't feel that way personally. Obviously, nobody wants to lose. Everyone hates losing. I wouldn't say the last month and a half or couple months was the most fun I've had playing basketball, but it is what it is. Life is about ups and downs. Seasons are about ups and downs. Through it all you've got to have core values and things that you stick by, and I think as a team we have those, and I think that's what allowed us to keep a positive mindset throughout the losing

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or whatever it was.

I can honestly say myself and my teammates got better throughout the whole situation, and all the losing and all that made us stronger, so I can't complain.

Q. Your rate of improvement has been just tremendous over really since we've been able to watch you from Kentucky to the Clippers and then the first two years with the Thunder. What's next? You improved your three-point shooting off the bounce tremendously this year. You improved your finishing. In your mind what is next for you?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Always continue to get stronger, try to get more athletic, faster, conditioning-wise. Really just work on my body. And then in terms of skills, just getting better the same way I did. You can always improve. I don't shoot 100 percent from the field. I don't shoot 100 percent from the free-throw line. I certainly don't shoot 100 percent from three, so I've got a lot of improvement I need to do, and I'll continue to do so.

Q. Kind of along those same lines, we know how hard you work to improve every year. You told us how hard you worked coming into this season to be able to take on that higher responsibility offensively. Whether it's finishing at the rim or shooting, is there anything in particular that you're most proud of that's kind of seeing your work pay off on the floor?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, what I'm most proud of -- I don't know if this is more about like me and my work, but I think the amount of fun myself and my teammates had throughout the whole season from start to finish, and obviously our group has changed around the deadline and stuff like that. We kind of had some new guys come in and come out.

But yeah, it was super fun no matter what, and all the guys that I was around this year were super fun. Even some of the ten days and things like that, guys meshed really well and we had a blast, and I can honestly say that's the thing I'm the most proud of. Obviously, in the NBA it's a business, and guys come and go a lot, and it's hard to find that. I think I found that this year, and it's something that I'm proud of.

Q. Was it tough at times, as the leader of the team, to not be on the court and be able to lead by example?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, absolutely. It's always harder to tell Lu to pick up full court when I'm not out there doing it myself. It's always harder to tell somebody to block a 300-pound guy out when I can't do it

myself. Guys respect me in the locker room, and I respect them. We have a really good relationship, so it wasn't necessarily hard, but it's always easier when you're on the court with them and can do it as an example. But the group of guys were great and made it easier for me to help on the sidelines not playing.

Q. Al was saying his decision to sit out was at least partially related to your injury as far as the timing of it. How do you think Al and the team sort of handled his situation, which was pretty unique, and what conversations have you had with him moving forward given that his future is pretty uncertain at this point of where he's going to play next season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, as far as Al's situation, I can't really speak too much about it. We haven't really had too many conversations about his whole situation. But Al Horford, obviously an A-1 character guy, was the vet in the locker room obviously this year. Not always the loudest in the room, but when he speaks, you listen, and handled himself really good this year. Obviously, it was big for most of the young guys who were -- 90 percent of us this year were young. He was big for our growth and our development.

And as far as his future, any team would be lucky to have a guy like Al Horford on their team, and not only for what he can do on the court but off the court, as well.

Q. I know the lottery is pretty far off, but that's going to be a big night for the organization, depending on what happens. How much are you going to pay attention to that or look who's on the board or stuff like that when you try to project who some of your new teammates might be?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I'm going to watch the whole draft for sure. I do every year. Even if I wasn't in the NBA, just to see -- it's always fun seeing guys' family reactions and stuff like that. Obviously it's a great moment. It'll be fun to watch. But yeah, I'll be tuned in. I'll be locked in and excited for all the guys that get drafted, not only guys that get drafted by the Thunder.

Q. Your brother announced that he's transferring to NEO, and I was curious what that's like for you to have him a little bit closer to home and about you guys' relationship.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, that'll be fun. I'll have to keep him away a little bit, don't spoil him too much. But yeah, that's my brother. We're super close. Having him a little bit closer will be fun.

Q. What's your scouting report on his game?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: He does everything I do but way better.

Q. I wondered if you had any first memories of meeting Aleksej Pokusevski, and if you could just about the progress he's made this season and what you see from him on the court.

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: First impression, he was just quiet at first. Obviously super tall. We got out there, we played pickup. He doesn't look like he moves as well as he does, but he does move really well for his size. That kind of surprised me, caught me off guard. But has great feel for the game. Obviously you guys know, you guys have seen it all year.

But Poku is another guy on this team that has -- obviously, it wasn't easy, ups and downs from start to finish, but through it all got better, and I'm excited for his future.

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