

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Darius Bazley

Press Conference



Q. What are some of the big areas that you felt like you improved on this season, just as you kind of look back on all the games played?

DARIUS BAZLEY: I feel like I've really grown a lot as a player and a person. I think, from the start of this season and to the end, I've matured a lot, with just the different opportunities and experiences that I've had the chance to go through. I feel like I've just -- I've learned so much with a lot of things, you know, skill-wise, just understanding the game more and more, being in different situations.

But I'd say the biggest thing, the biggest takeaway, the stuff that I strive for, the stuff that the team strives for, it's found in details. So just to keep working those little things. It could be as simple as talking on defense, talking in transition, watching film. That stuff is found in details.

I'm taking away a lot from this season. The easy way out is just to tell you that I've gotten better with driving and shooting, but it really was a lot to learn from, and I'm grateful for the experience.

Q. You talk about those different experiences that you were able to go through this season. I just think about on the defensive end and all of the different defensive assignments you've been able to have and go up against. How much pride do you take in those experiences, and how much were you able to learn from those?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah, the defensive experiences, that was great. I got to go up against and guard some really good players this year. Just to go through those things and get a feel for that and learn from that is really good, but defensively, I think a lot of guys take pride in it. It's just one of those things you kind of take personal.

The defensive experiences, they've been good this year, definitely something to take away from learn from, just to be able to go and rewatch and get ready for next year. I feel like it was necessary to be able to go through those things. I could see myself guarding bigger wings and

smaller guards in the future. So I'm glad I got to experience that.

Q. What are your plans this off-season, and what's an area you're focused on trying to improve?

DARIUS BAZLEY: This off-season, my plans is just to work. I got four months, three months. It's not really that much time. The years go by fast. I can't believe I'm about to be a third-year player. I was just a rookie last year. So just to work, I'll really be focusing on getting stronger and just staying consistent, keep building good habits.

It's not really one specific area. My whole game needs work, from shooting to getting stronger to dribbling, passing, the whole nine.

Q. I know they didn't play with you guys down the stretch, but vets like Mike Muscala and Al Horford, what did you learn from them? Was there one of them that gave you a lot of advice as the season went on?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Muskie and Al, they're true professionals, great guys. The way they approach the game, the way they show up every day and attack each day, I feel like that's what myself, any of the guys on the team can take away from. They show up with the mindset to attack today. Like I said, they're true professionals. Just to see how they carry themselves on and off the court, for me, it's a pleasure to be around, and for me being a young player, I think it's -- I'm blessed to be around that to kind of see, to have a visual model to be able to look and say, that's how I want to be going forward.

Q. You've talked this season about how exciting those late-game moments and those times that require execution have been for you. Just how much fun has that been to kind of have your competitiveness brought forth in those situations and getting to see yourself act out those moments?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Those have been super enjoyable. The first thing that comes to mind is when Lu hit that game winner in the corner. Just games like that, that's fun. Even games like -- who were we playing? It was a bunch of teams down the stretch, we were back and forth. We played Washington at their place and Indiana at their place, the Suns here. A lot of the matchup teams we go



against late game, it's fun. I mean, it's competition, and again, we're a young team. It's stuff that we get to learn from. So that's good.

Q. How much interest will you have on NBA lottery night to kind of see where this team lands with their first round picks? Will you be watching or interested at all?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah, I watch -- like I've watched it every year. So I'll carry over and watch this year. I'm excited for the direction this team is moving, like going forward, just the growth that we're having. Yeah, I'll be tuned in, and I'll be watching.

Q. Could you talk about the growth that you've seen in Shai. Obviously he's grown tremendously as a player, but then as a leader of this group, to go from having Chris Paul one year to not. Can you just talk about how he's been as a leader on and off the court?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Shai's been tremendous. He's obviously a really good player, and he leads us on the floor and off the floor as well. His work ethic is impeccable. He's always -- you see him either on the court, in the weight room, getting treatment. Whatever he's doing, every decision he makes, it's always how does this better myself, and how does this better the team.

For us to be able to look to him, it's good. Like I said, he's made tremendous strides, and it may be even hard to see because he's -- like I said, he's so good. But Shai, he's a great leader. With Chris being his vet last year -- well, he was a second-year guy, but Chris took him under his wing. He took a lot of us under his wing. He definitely passed on some stuff because Shai has become a great leader.

Q. You guys were a pretty competitive team halfway through the year, then you had the injuries. You had the guys sitting out. Things went downhill pretty fast after that. How do you guard with such young guys with apparent bright futures -- how do you guard against some of the negatives of losing impacting you going forward?

DARIUS BAZLEY: We were a competitive team, I think, the whole year. It's not the first half. No matter who was on the floor, I feel like we were out there and we were competing and we were trying to get better.

As far as the losing, I feel like, because of the group of guys we had, that didn't really impact us. No matter what, when we came in the next day, we were ready to get to work. We were ready to learn from losses, learn from mistakes, and prepare for whoever we had next.

Coach always talks about just having a 0-0 mentality, and that basically -- it's not getting too high. It's not getting too low. You may win the game by 30 -- good example, we played the Rockets the first time, and they beat us by however much, set a record for threes, and then we played them again, and we beat them by a bunch. With this game, it can go either way. It didn't affect us.

With us just being so young, I feel like it's kind of an advantage of a sort. We're all young, have energy, something to prove. So just going out there and trying to compete and just get better is what we were focused on.

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