

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Isaiah Roby

Press Conference



Q. Isaiah, as you kind of reflect on the season, and essentially this is a rookie year for you, what did you think of all of the wide range of opportunities that you were given, just in terms of the different defensive assignments you were given and obviously playing everything from a two through a four on the offensive end?

ISAIAH ROBY: Yeah, I was definitely very appreciative of the opportunity that I earned this year with the team. It was definitely a lot of learning experiences, a lot of invaluable experiences. It's never going to be a smooth ride, so being able to go have really good ups and some downs that really hurt, I think that's all -- it's always a good thing in a season. To be able to bounce back from those things, that's what makes a good player and a good team.

Q. Isaiah, it looked like you proved this year that you're an NBA player. Do you feel that way yourself? When do you think you sort of knew? If so, when did you think you knew, hey, I can do this.

ISAIAH ROBY: Absolutely, I do think I proved that this season. Coming into the start of the year, that was kind of like my goal. That was kind of my motivation through the summer to have that type of performance this year. I think that the moment I knew it was when coming into games, other teams -- other players that I knew growing up, watching some of my favorite players, they would be like, oh, yeah, watch out for Roby, he does this. Watch out for Roby on this play because this is how he gets to however -- you know, whatever it was.

But just earning respect from other players, other teams, other coaching staff. You know, they would talk to me during the game like where did you grow up? Who recruited you? They were kind of just intrigued by me because I never really had an opportunity to play against them before, and I was kind of garnering their respect.

Q. It's kind of funny you were saying other teams were saying, watch out for Roby. This is what he does. But all throughout the season, it seemed like you were

doing something different from game to game. You were asked to do so many different types of things. As you look back and reflect, what were some of the things you were asked to do that you think you really did well, and what are some things that, as you look back in some of the situations you were put in, you're thinking, I really want to focus on trying to do that better moving forward?

ISAIAH ROBY: I think that's one of my big strengths is just being able to be versatile like that, and on any given night, being able to have a different responsibility and perform that well. I think that some of the things I need to improve on are definitely taking care of the ball. There were some games where I'm very loose with the ball and it resulted in a lot of turnovers for our team. That's something that you can't really be a good team with a lot of mistakes like that, so that's something I want to improve on, especially when I'm playing on the perimeter, when I'm in more of a three or four role.

I think at the five, also some things I need to work on is just my overall strength on things like the rebound, blocking out bigger guys than me. On the other side, I think that's where a lot of my strength can be used. As a five, I did a really good job of bringing the ball up, pushing the pace, kind of like as a point center, point forward. And having the other team's center come out and guard me on the perimeter opened up the court a lot for the rest of -- not only for myself, but for my teammates as well. So I think being able to use my versatility there was a great benefit this year, especially at the five position.

Then I think defensively I'm able to guard at any position in the NBA. I think guarding one through five is an invaluable skill for any team. I think this year I started out -- I want to say I started at least one game in every position defensively, guarding at one, two, three, four, or five. So I think that's another thing that I can continue to get better on, but I think I had a great start to my career with.

Q. Sticking with that defensive versatility, what are some assignments you had this year who, going into this off-season and training, you're going to reflect on and use to develop?

ISAIAH ROBY: I started out on Jokic, Giannis. Those are two guys that stood out to me because, obviously, MVP



candidates. Jaylen Brown, started on him. There's a lot of guys, in addition to the guys I'm naming -- Jokic in the center, Giannis is a power forward, Jaylen Brown is a shooting guard -- those are three guys the coaches wanted to give me the challenge, give me the opportunity to go against those guys.

The one thing that I think that I did really well is, after the first time playing them, in the resulting games after that, I think I improved a lot. After the first time playing Jokic, played him better the second time, and even with Giannis. So I think just continuing to get better with that.

Q. Isaiah, last year you dealt with plantar fasciitis, and Shai has dealt with that this year. I'm just wondering, have you talked with him about that injury or coming back from that or relate to what he's gone through in the second half?

ISAIAH ROBY: For sure. When I heard that he was dealing with that, I told him it's nothing to be -- it can get worse. I was told in college -- actually, that's when I started dealing with it first. I was told it can't get worse. It's something you've just got to play through, and that was a lie. So I told him definitely take it -- you know, be smart about it. Don't try to be a hero. Don't try to rush back from this because you don't want it to linger and you end up having to get surgery three years down the line like I did.

Thankfully, with the training staff here, they did a great job of getting me back, and I haven't had any pain with that since rehabbing that, and I think that with Shai, he's dealing with the same training staff, but just before the surgery. So I think he's going to come back feeling fine and never have to worry about it again because it is preventable.

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