

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

Monday, September 27, 2021
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander Press Conference



Q. (On what he worked on in the off season.)

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: The foot injury, strengthening my feet and kind of fixing that mechanically. And then in terms of on the court, just getting better in every asset. I feel like you can't go wrong if you do that, so that's what I focus on.

Q. You said you felt good now for a while. At what point were you able to get back on the court and work out in practice, sort of full go?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I don't know the exact time, but it was a little bit of time in the summer where I really felt like, okay, I'm completely back, like I'm jumping, running as fast as I can with no restrictions at all. Like towards the end of the season I'd say, beginning of the summer, I could do those things, but I'd feel it the next day a little bit, but I'd say midway through the summer, I felt like, okay, it's completely gone.

Q. I wanted to ask about signing your extension that was announced basically as soon as it could. I imagine those were fairly easy conversations, but what did that mean to you to get that offer and sign that max contract?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, obviously it was a dream come true. Super proud of it, super happy about it, obviously. But I know for me, the job is not done, work is not done. It's just one milestone I get to cross off my list, but I still have 90 percent of my list, so I won't stop.

Q. With that long-term extension, I imagine comes a lot of patience on your part as the team is going through a rebuild and a really young roster. You're certainly leading that. How are you approaching this rebuild or the multiple years of work you guys have ahead of you?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. First, it would probably be kind of the same way I approach my own development: Take it one day at a time. You can only be

present. You can only take it a day at a time, try to get better every single day in whatever area you want to, and then it'll work itself out over time.

I feel like that's had success for my career so far, and I'll probably take the same approach with the team.

Q. Not that this has changed, but the contract, you're the guy, you're the face of the franchise, does that change anything how you approach your job away from the court, around the guys, not just on the court being kind of the face of the franchise?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, not at all. I think especially the guys on this team are all super humble and work super hard and don't deserve to be on a lower pedestal than anybody. For me, I see them as equals. The same guys and me put on the same jersey, go out there and play the same way.

Having a little bit more experience on this team obviously I'll be able to say things -- like I said, I've had experience so I'll be able to lead the guys a little bit more, but as far as how I look at it, it's all equal.

Q. A year ago we saw obviously you in limited time, but the evolution we saw out of you was pretty dramatic. What's your expectation on just what will evolve in your game this year? It seems like you started to scratch the surface about the time that the foot gave you problems, but what's sort of your sense of what's next, what's coming next?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, so over the summer I tried to focus on, like I said, getting better at everything day by day, and I think it will take care of itself. That's why over the years that's why guys have seen me improve. I don't know the exact area, but I do feel like I got better as a basketball player, and I will be better this year.

And not really; it's life. You have things -- obviously not playing basketball as hard. Love basketball, but it's the card I was dealt and I dealt with it moving forward, and I felt like I got better, so I'm fine.

Q. You took a big leadership role last year. You're going to take a bigger stride as a leader for the team this season. What was the biggest thing you learned

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last season that you're going to take into this one, and are you prepared for that next step for yourself?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I think the biggest thing I learned about last season was that words only go so far, and you have to lead by example if you really want guys to follow what you're doing and have good intentions. That's I think the thing that I bring to next season, to lead by example and not only tell them what to do but show them what to do.

Q. Looked like you got some physical work in, your arms got more --

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. What did I tell you?

Q. You're kind of buff. Am I right?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, you are very correct, yes.

Q. What did you do? Did you pick up weight or strength or what did you do?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, I'm a slimmer frame guy, obviously, so every summer I try to put on weight, and I think last summer I put on the most weight I've put on in a very short period of time. Not last summer but before the bubble last season, and this summer I just focused on strength, not so much weight, and I feel like I feel stronger as well as faster, and that's an experience I just go through summer by summer. So I feel stronger and faster, not so much weight.

Q. Is that something you've learned?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, exactly.

Q. You guys obviously bring in Josh with the draft and Theo continues to evolve. They're not the only ones who can handle the ball, but what's your expectation of how this will evolve in terms of you on the court with Josh, you on the court with Theo? What's that going to look like? How is that going to work for you guys?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah. I think especially in today's NBA with the positionless basketball, it'll work just fine. My first year in OKC we played a lot of the games, a lot of the games with three point guards, and it worked just fine. So I think me, Josh and Theo will make it work.

Just to speak about those guys, those guys are multidimensional players and can do multiple things on the

court and are guys that I have trust in, and I know they have good intentions. So it'll work itself out.

Q. Last year was the first time you were away from basketball for an extended period of time; is there anything that you picked up being away from the court that you can maybe use coming into this season?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Good question. I guess you can say like don't take any moment for granted. Being away from the game was obviously hard, and you always think to yourself, like what if I did this, would this have happened, so I just tried to take advantage of every opportunity I would say.

Q. How do you think your growing reputation in the fashion industry can impact OKC's next generation culturally?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: We have a lot of fashionable guys on the team already, so I think I'll just add to it. But yeah, we have a lot of guys that -- I mean, fashion is something outside of the court. We have a lot of guys that enjoy it, and I guess we bond over it a little bit more, and it ultimately makes us closer as a group.

But yeah, we're all in the same space. We're all super fashionable. (Laughter).

Q. You talked about having a bigger leadership role this year and last year; how important is it having a guy like Derrick Favors who's a seasoned vet also on the team with you guys?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, it allows all of us to learn. He's played a lot more games than a lot of us, and ultimately that means more experience, knowing what to do in certain situations, and he'll help a lot with this group, myself, as well, and I'm excited for him to be a part of this group and help us along this process.

Q. Both Sam and Mark talked about how you guys have a blank canvas this year. You talked about earlier taking things day by day, but when you're building the identity of this team, what are some of the other cornerstone-type things that you guys want to do this year as you're forming the identity going forward with this young core?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: As far as I'm concerned, as much as I know, every single guy that puts on the Thunder jersey for every day that he's with the organization gets better that day. I think for me, like I said, for me, that's all I -- me and my teammates can worry about and control that situation, and I do believe that if we do that, then we

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will be in the best situation possible on the other end of this tunnel.

Q. Is there one teammate who needs the most help in the fashion department?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: That's a great question. He's already in my head. I just don't want to say it. I'll keep it a secret.

Q. It seems like you guys were really able to connect with Mark last year. If that's the case, what did he do in year one as a head coach to make an imprint on you guys, and what has it been like to work with him?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Yeah, super humble and super personable. Those are the easiest things to be coached by. You know where he's coming from, so when he's yelling in your face, you know it's from a good place. At the end of the day he's going to talk to you, and you almost don't feel like he's the head coach and you're the player. It's human-to-human conversation. He just wants the best for each player, and you can feel that when he coaches you, and he's fun to play for.

Q. Is it different at all to be coached by a guy who doesn't have NBA experience or even college basketball experience? Does that change things?

SHAI GILGEOUS-ALEXANDER: Not at all. A great basketball mind is a great basketball mind. My whole life up until the NBA and up until college, I never got coached by an NBA coach, and I got better every year and trusted those coaches, and they are part of the reason why I'm here. So yeah, I don't think it changes anything.

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