

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Darius Bazley Press Conference



Q. You look like you've been on the weights a little bit. Did you bulk up, put on some weight? What's the deal with that?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah, I mean, I took like two weeks off after the season ended and then got straight to it. Me and the strength coaches, we had a plan, and we stuck to it. I mean, I'm glad you noticed. It makes me feel good that the work is paying off.

I definitely was in the weight room trying to get bigger and get stronger for this upcoming season.

Q. How much did you put on?

DARIUS BAZLEY: I don't know, to be exact. I just know I was working.

Q. This is your third year; not that you weren't at ease, but you've kind of been through some stuff. How much more comfortable are you with your game and what, if anything, have you added to your game?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah, like you said, going into my third year. I've had a lot of experiences. I've been able to grow through them all. I'm a lot more comfortable coming into this year kind of having a sense of just knowing what to expect, what's going to be in front of me, what the year kind of looks like.

This off-season, just working on a lot of things, shooting -- my whole overall game. I wouldn't really say as much added, just a lot of learning from all the experiences that I had, especially last year. I had a lot of opportunities to go through a lot of different scenarios and situations.

Q. (On his goals).

DARIUS BAZLEY: Not really personally. I'm not that kind of person. When I do set personal goals, it's kind of like still for the team really. The only thing personally I would say is defensively just keep taking on challenges and keep accepting bigger roles, guarding bigger wing players, and

down the line making a defensive team. That's really the only thing that I had for myself.

Q. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about Mark; obviously after last year, his first year as a head coach -- you're smiling so you've obviously got something fun to say about him. But he seemed to connect with you guys. Is that true? And how do you think he was able to do that, if that is true?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Like I was already smiling. Like Mark is an amazing, amazing person. I'm so grateful to be being coached by him. On and off the court, I feel like he's helped me already so much. He's helped me grow so much. He's one of the reasons why I feel so comfortable coming into this year, just because -- I mean, when you have -- it's almost like -- there's not a thing in this world I wouldn't do for my mom, and when it comes to basketball, there's not -- whatever Coach Mark asks of me, I'm going to try my best to make sure it gets done, like make sure it happens, that I'm able to see it through.

I think he's able to have the impact on us and the relationship just because he cares. It's not just X's and O's. Like it's way beyond that when it comes to him. He doesn't really view it as like a coach and player relationship; we're both working together to help each other.

I have a lot of respect and just a lot of love for him.

Q. It's a big thing to say that about non-family.

DARIUS BAZLEY: It's like that throughout the whole Thunder organization. Everyone is special. You develop relationships with everyone. But I think it was after the Cleveland game, I think it was after the Cleveland game or Milwaukee game, we were on the road -- I think it might have been after the Cleveland game. We were on the bus headed to the airport, and I played terrible. We had a conversation, and it just kind of like shifted the whole -- like from that point on, it just shifted everything. The conversation, you just couldn't tell like he cared. Like it wasn't just like, you're playing bad, figure it out. That conversation, it shifted a whole lot.

Q. There's so many young guys on this roster, yourself still included in that group. How do you



anticipate the competition being like in training camp as you guys are obviously teammates but trying to compete against each other at the same time? How can you push each other maybe in that way?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah. The competitiveness will be really high without a doubt. Everyone is really eager to get started. Everyone is really eager to get going. We've done some open runs leading up here, and it's been nothing short of competitive.

I think in ways, just pushing each other. I have my little bit of experience, guys that's been here in this organization, we all have our experience. Musky, him being older, D-Fave, just being able to push and pull on the young guys and teach us, kind of pass down some stuff.

I mean, just us going at each other, I mean, I think that'll do it right there, just lining up against each other.

And then also being able to separate the two and pull someone to the side and say, hey, I went through that my first year or I went through this my second year or I was in that situation, and just kind of help them out in that.

Q. You had a really good close to last season; how important is it to get off to a fast start this year to kind of carry that momentum through and continue that high level of play all year long?

DARIUS BAZLEY: Yeah, I mean, it's always good to end the season stronger than you started. I'm not really making it a focus point to get the ball going like right away. I mean, of course I want to play great and make an impact right off the jump. Who wouldn't? But I'm just trying to keep my focus on the small things that ultimately make a big difference. Just focusing on things I can control every night, and I think doing those things will help shape an identity for me and will help get me going on other aspects of the game on the floor.

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