

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Isaiah Roby Press Conference



Q. I've got to ask about the Nebraska game. How was that experience?

ISIAAH ROBY: It was awesome. That was my first time going to -- I'm not sure what Oklahoma's football stadium is called.

Q. Gaylord Family Memorial Stadium.

ISIAAH ROBY: It was my first time there.

Q. I mean, I write it about once a day.

ISIAAH ROBY: It was fun. It was a great game. I was just hoping that we kept it competitive, and I mean, shoot, we had a real good shoot at winning that game. I was up there in my Nebraska gear and we were sitting in there Bennett's suite and I felt the tension in there kind of rising a little bit. No, it was fun, though. We had a great time and got to meet some of Mr. Bennett's family. It was fun.

Q. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Shai and his evolution. You obviously didn't get to play alongside him all season last year because of his injury, but what most impressed you about the steps he took a year ago, and what do you think we're about to see with him now getting ready to take sort of that probably next step?

ISIAAH ROBY: Yeah, I think some of the things that impressed me the most about Shai and his game and his approach to basketball is just his confidence. I remember when I first got traded here, we were playing -- I think we were playing Chicago on the road, and he wasn't having the best game but he looked the same. He looked like the same player. I noticed that from the first day I was here. Even before my first start he came up to me before lineups and he was like, just go out there, like you earned the starter's position, we believe in you and go out there and you've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. That's probably the biggest thing that I've noticed from him.

Q. You got quite a bit of action last season, especially

towards the end of it. What did you take from that into your off-season training? What did you focus on?

ISIAAH ROBY: Yeah, before coming into last season I didn't really have any idea what to expect, how teams were going to guard me, what position I was going to be playing mostly. Now I kind of have a really good idea of that, I kind of play like a point center position for us with our positionless basketball that we play. I think going into the off-season I was just focused on just continuing to shoot as much as possible, get more comfortable with the NBA three and shooting from all different sides, positions on the court. Also my efficiency and just being more -- taking care of the ball, things like that, being on efficient on offense and defense.

Q. You said you worked on your offensive efficiency; it seemed like your game took a little bit of a dip last season, maybe February. Where do you think you need to be so that you just continue to improve and continue to excel throughout the season?

ISIAAH ROBY: Yeah, I think I started off pretty well. I was shooting the ball well and played pretty well when I first got to the starting lineup, and I think that's just the fact that it's the NBA. Teams are going to scout you and they're going to put you -- they're going to take away what you're best at. I think that teams saw me as a guy who was taking open shots and then when I have a center close out on me I was driving them hard. So they adjusted and I took this off-season and watched a lot of film, and I'll make my adjustments come this season.

Q. Do you think a similar situation happened with Lu Dort whenever teams would start to scout him, like say, okay, this guy is a big defensive threat and kind of formulate their offense around that?

ISIAAH ROBY: Yeah, for sure. Obviously most nights Lu is going to be guarding the other team's best guy unless he's a big, so I think that's something that obviously the NBA is full of the best coaches, the best players, so I think those adjustments are going to come, and I think last season was a great learning experience for all of us, learning that it's a long season.

Q. You kind of mentioned that you play a lot of positions. Which do you like to play most, because

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you did play some center. What's your best one?

ISAIAH ROBY: With our philosophy, both defensive and offensive, I really think I can play any position, and I like playing all positions because Coach Mark, he loves us all to dribble the ball. We have a team full of guys who are just multiskilled. No matter what position I play, I'll be able to push the fast break. If I get a rebound, I can push it, I can shoot the ball, I can dribble. I think I'm just a versatile player out there and can do whatever they ask me to do on a given night.

Q. What's the relationship, because a lot of you guys are in the same boat. You're young, same age except a couple guys who are 30, older. You're all learning your way, proving yourselves in the NBA. How is the relationship when you're all trying to get on the court?

ISAIAH ROBY: I think it's good. I think the summer has been good because we're all young and we don't really have that many veterans around us, so I think it's going to take guys holding each other accountable, even though we're all learning and we're trying to get our feet set in the NBA, I think we all know how to play basketball really well and we know what it takes to win games and compete. I think even though we are young, being able to hold each other accountable and being able to go out there and compete every night is going to be big for us.

Q. The way you were describing your game, I feel like that's the type of player the Thunder has targeted recently as far as like Josh Giddey, a big guy who can handle the ball, play different positions; Poku is similar in that sense. What is it like being on the floor when all five guys might be interchangeable in some ways and have sort of overlapping skill sets?

ISAIAH ROBY: I think if you look at even the NBA Playoffs, NBA Finals, you'll see that that's where the most successful teams are having success is if the other team has a guy out there who can't really do more than one thing, if he's just a specialist, then in the Playoffs teams expose that. So I think being able to have five guys who can all take care of the ball, dribble, shoot, pass, make plays for each other, I think it's just invaluable because not only defensively we can all switch and we can all guard, but like you said, we have Giddey who's 6'8" and he can guard guards or forwards. Having things like that just makes us more versatile and makes match-ups harder.

Q. Based on the guys we've talked to today, a lot of them have -- a lot of your teammates have said they've been able to connect with Mark, even in his first year as a head coach, and how he's been able to connect with you guys. How would you describe that

relationship and how he's been able to relate and connect with you guys as a new coach?

ISAIAH ROBY: Yeah, me and Coach Mark have had a good relationship. Actually when I first got traded here he was my assistant that I worked with daily, so I already had a pretty good relationship with him before he became head coach, and then when he became head coach, I thought that was really good because he knows how to connect to not only the young guys because he spent a lot of time in college, but also the veteran guys. They give him a lot of respect, too, and I think he's got a great basketball mind, and I look forward to continuing to work with him.

Q. How did you juggle going to school and an NBA career?

ISAIAH ROBY: Yeah, it was tough. I mean, there would be a lot of times where we'd be traveling and I would be doing homework or reading. That's not what you want to be doing when you're on the road with your teammates.

But I think that was important for me to get that taken care of because basketball stops for everybody at some point. There's not too many guys that are lucky enough to have 15-year careers in the NBA. Like that's an anomaly. For me getting a degree was always part of my plan, and I'm just excited to be able to get a lot more sleep this year and not have to worry about taking a test before I have to guard somebody or just whatever. I'm looking forward to that this year.

Q. Is there going to be a breakfast club sequel this year or breakfast club donuts?

ISAIAH ROBY: I think so. We've got a young team. Guys are going to have fresh legs. I know college puts a lot of miles on your body. We've got a lot of guys who spent little to no time in college. I know we're going to have some guys getting after it.

Even though I'm one of the older guys on the team now, I'm still looking forward to being a part of that breakfast club, being in there early and getting some work in.

Q. Playing in those lineups where guys can just play every position, how do you think that's going to help you develop as a player, develop more as a player?

ISAIAH ROBY: Yeah, I think that's huge because it puts you in a different positions where you might come down, like especially, for instance, if I grab a rebound and I come down and a guard picks me up, now I might be able to take him to the block and post him up, and then our point guard might have a center on him.

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It allows you to exploit the defense, and defensively it allows you to be able to show different things. Like I feel like I can guard any position.

Defensively if the game plan is to switch, I feel like I can switch and guard anybody. It allows you to show more but also it challenges you to be good at more things. That's a challenge that last season there was games where I did things really well and things that I didn't do so well, so just being able to learn from that and become better at all those things is good.

Q. Because of the pandemic time warp, I may have this wrong, but I think you played games here before the fans were shut out, at least a couple, right?

ISAIAH ROBY: Yeah, I was a part of a few games -- I didn't get to play in front of the crowd here I don't think, but yeah, there was a few like night games here.

Q. So the fact the fans are going to be back this year, what does that do for you having experienced a game or two here that does have fans, and was it weird last year when you'd go on the road and some of these arenas continually adding fans as the season went on but you were always coming back here to empty? What was that like?

ISAIAH ROBY: Yeah, it was tough. Honestly it kind of felt like we were playing a bunch of scrimmages in an arena. Honestly the NBA did the best they could at getting fake crowd noise piped in, but there's nothing like having a real crowd in the gym. You can feel the energy from the crowd.

I remember I forgot what game it was actually that was our first away game with fans, but they're talking crap to us, and I kind of like -- they were talking to me directly at one point, and I was like, that's kind of foreign. I miss having that, I miss being able to heckle back and forth and silence the crowd.

I'm looking forward to it. I know all of Oklahoma City is excited to get back in here, and I've heard we have the best home-court advantage in the NBA, so I'm looking forward to seeing it.

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