

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Lu Dort

Press Conference



Q. Lu, you were part of that group during the end of the season cheering on your teammates even though you couldn't play. What does that say about the chemistry and connectedness of this group that you built this season?

LU DORT: It says a lot. It's just the bond that we have. I feel like we're always cheering for each other. I feel like just the fight that we have, so many guys out, the only thing we could really do was be loud on the bench, but I feel like it really helped the team.

Q. Obviously you're a big part of the defensive effort this team. As a group what did you think of the way you guys were able to tap into that sort of identity this year?

LU DORT: One of the main things we said at the beginning of the year was to compete at the highest level every night, and I felt like that was just the standard we had for the whole year, and we kept it just by doing that. I feel like I get a little proud of myself to lead by example, but at the same time I feel like the whole team really was digging into that and came to compete hard every night.

Q. How is your shoulder? How far are you from being able to play?

LU DORT: It's getting better. I'm still on top of my rehab. I've still got a couple more -- about two, three months just to be back at 100 percent, but I can start doing a little bit of shooting, but I'm really taking my time with that, just really trying to be ready for next season.

Q. How did the injury happen?

LU DORT: I feel like it's something that I had over time. It just kept hitting at what happened. I feel like it's been there for a little bit. This year I banged it a little bit and we discovered that it was a torn labrum. Just talking to the staff and everybody, I felt like it was better for me to do the surgery now in order to be healthy and carry it -- just do my rehab during the off-season and be ready for next season.

Q. Did you know during the year that surgery might be necessary at some point?

LU DORT: No, I didn't really know coming into the season. I had it but I just really didn't feel it. I thought it was just like a shoulder pain. I didn't think it was that serious, but when we discovered it I thought it was the best thing to take care of it now.

Q. Being an elite defender you obviously can kind of see things play out and you can notice small changes in other players. With Bazley's progression this season from the beginning to the end, what have you seen from him on the defensive end that's really grown?

LU DORT: I'm going to say first toughness. I feel like Baze is capable of guarding a lot of positions and I feel like he did a good job of that this year, just the fact that he can move so well with his height and just the fact that he's tough as a player, just pushing him and helping him a little bit on that just from knowing some players' tendencies, I feel like he did a great job of that this year.

Q. When you came back from the off-season you were saying that you were working on your footwork, trying to make sure that you could be a little bit quicker on the defensive end. What do you see yourself working on specifically this summer going into the off-season?

LU DORT: I really want to say the same stuff. I don't feel like there's any more I can really do than just being quick on my feet and staying in front of anybody I guard. I feel like really just doing the same stuff. I feel like really perfecting what I'm doing well already is going to be good for me.

Q. Because you guys are under the salary floor, you're going to get some sort of bonus at the end of the season; is that something you guys talked about together, you were sort of looking forward to toward the end of the year?

LU DORT: I mean, we didn't really talk about it. I mean, we did talk about it a little bit, but it's just great that they're doing that for us. We lay a lot out on the floor and we work hard all year and we've got to thank the organization for



doing that for us, just all the players.

Q. You talked about the team's decision to compete all year and the positivity that we saw and I think we heard even as you guys have talked. Do you think that's where it came from? There were nights that were tough I'm sure. How did you keep that positivity, keep that attitude?

LU DORT: For me, just the environment we have in our locker room and here in this building. I just feel like we're really positive and we know what we're capable of, we know what we're building. Even though we had some tough nights, at the end of the day we still had our goal, and we just kept that standard even though sometimes it was going our way or wasn't, we just kept the thought in our mind, just kept a positive mind.

Q. I asked Mark about Shai as a leader and one of the things he mentioned was Shai's positivity. Maybe that's who Shai is just inherently, I don't know, but how did that attitude that he brought, how did that translate over to the rest of you?

LU DORT: Yeah, that's really Shai as a person. Like you don't really see Shai being mad or disappointed even though we had a bad loss or whatever, he's still always positive and brings the team up. I feel like that's one of the things he's really good at and he's going to keep doing that for us.

I feel like just the environment really in the locker room really helps, as well.

Q. You're eligible for an extension this season. How are you feeling about your contract situation?

LU DORT: I mean, I'm going to let my agent handle that and my people, and I'm really just really a lot focused on the development of this team and organization. I feel like we have high standards, and I feel like it's something that we're going to keep in our mind in the off-season, but I'm going to let my agent handle it.

Q. You obviously have nothing to compare it to, but four years in, how beneficial has it been playing for a franchise as stable as the Thunder?

LU DORT: It's been great. It's been great. I feel like I just learned so much just from my first year being here with all the older guys, and I kind of see the foundation, how it was to be a playoff team, and I feel like it's something that I've kept with me during these past two years that we're trying to build. I feel like it's something that me, Shai and Baze was on that team, and it's stuff that we can just tell the

other guys and show at the same time that that's what it takes to get where we want to be.

Q. How far away do you think you guys are from being back to that point that you were two years ago?

LU DORT: I feel like if we keep building the way we do, I feel like next year we're going to be in a way better position. I feel like it's just experience. I feel like every player is going to get older and is going to be able to bring more to the team, and I feel like a lot of games we played this year came down to the wire. We had a lot of comebacks, and I feel like we didn't really end the game well, and I feel like that's just experience. I feel we're definitely going to get better at that.

Q. You and Kenrich expressed that you think things will be different competitively next year. Are there any goals for you guys or do you have a specific win goal?

LU DORT: Oh, definitely make it to the Playoffs. That's got to be the goal. Then we'll go from there. I feel like we'll be a team that's going to shock a lot of people and just the way we compete and play hard, but the goal is definitely a playoff.

Q. When the draft gets closer, do you start looking a little bit at names, bios, videos of guys that could become teammates? You guys have got so many draft picks. Do you look at that stuff?

ISAIAH ROBY: I kind of looked at little bit. I like watching basketball so I watched a couple college games, and there's some names that popped out that I heard about. But I'm really just leaving this to the organization. I trust them with whatever they're doing and I feel like we've been doing a great job, so I feel like it's more great stuff coming up.

Q. You guys have lost a lot these last two years. You went about your rookie year, you played in Game 7, scored 30 points. How do you deal with the frustration of going through this rebuild personally? How do you sort of handle it?

LU DORT: I'm definitely staying positive. I felt like that everything happens for a reason, and I feel like that put myself in a better position, just to be able to showcase what I could do more on the court. So I'm really staying positive, and I trust what we're doing right now and how good we're going to be, so yeah, I'm definitely staying positive.

Q. For a guy like you who began his career with the Blue and obviously had a great path to where you are

now, how fun was it for you this season seeing the amount of guys who had opportunities to be on an NBA floor?

LU DORT: It was fun. Sometimes guys go in the G-League and they think it's over and it's tough to go back to the NBA, but just the fact that some guys see -- like it started with Deyonta Brown when I first was there and then me and then Aaron Wiggins did it and a couple guys did it, just coming back and forth. I feel like they stayed positive and they believed that they have a plan for them and going to the G-League is going to help them just improving as a player and then coming back with us in the NBA and just playing better.

Q. Shai said that you can guard everyone in the league except him, so I think it's only fair to ask you, do you think you can guard Shai?

LU DORT: A hundred percent, yeah. Shai is a tough one-on-one player, but there's a lot of times I got Shai and I'm going to let him know because that's how we play, that's how we compete. Every time we're on the court we're just trying to get each other better really.

Q. Everyone talks about how much the organization communicates with you guys about what the plan is. Part of that plan is they store a number of draft picks, which means there will be more players coming in this summer and the next. Is that more exciting or does that put pressure on those that are here? I don't know what the mindset is on that.

LU DORT: It's got to be exciting just to see some new young guys coming into this league and just to help us win. I feel like I don't really see it as pressure. I feel like everybody got to earn what they want, and I feel like everybody will do, so I feel like it's good just to see young guys coming in.

Q. What are your thoughts on playing with Josh this year, and have you ever played with a guy like him before?

LU DORT: No, it was great. I mean, Josh was -- he's way ahead of his age, just the way he plays and the way he moves the ball and the way he rebounds. I feel like me as a slasher and as a guy that really runs the floor, it was great for me for him to always find me and making the good reads for the team, and I felt like Josh is just going to get better. He's really young, and I feel like the more experience he's going to have in this league, he's going to be a really great player.

Q. You're known as a defensive player and scored 17

points per game, you led the team in scoring several nights this season. What do you think you have to do for people to notice that you're more than just a defensive player?

LU DORT: Just stay consistent. I feel like I've kind of shown that I can do it, I've just got to stay consistent and keep showing it. I feel like I'm a really great defender, but at the same time I can bring a lot to the team. I feel like really just staying consistent and keep showing it.

Q. Before the season started you told us about the different things you did to train last off-season. This off-season I know some of it's going to be with rehab, but are you still hoping to get in some of the variety. You've got a longer off-season; how is that going to impact your plan for the summer?

LU DORT: I mean, I'll still do everything. Everything I can do to just stay in shape and conditioning, I'll just do what I feel like is fun. Sometimes you just step away from basketball and do some other stuff and still work on my body, so I feel like after my rehab when I'll be really back at 100 percent, I'll just go back to boxing and just playing tennis or jiu-jitsu or whatever, just keep my body in shape.

Q. You mentioned before that the goal for the next season is the Playoffs. What makes you so optimistic if you look at the work that you put in as a team, what makes you so optimistic for the next season?

LU DORT: Just really what we're building, the foundation that we've based and the goals that we've set. I feel like we're not too far from that. It's just, like I said, a lot of games came down to the wire, and it was just not having a lot of experience, so I feel like just another year under our belt will just kind of help the team just grow, and I feel like we're going to be in a way better position.

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