

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Kenrich Williams

Press Conference



Q. How is the wrist feeling?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Feeling good. I get my cast off next month.

Q. How hard was it for you to watch these last two games and not be out there with them?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, it was super hard. Especially with these being two important games. I want to be out there with the guys and just try to impact the game. But I did my best trying to be vocal.

Q. With you being out this season or the back half of the season, what did you learn and see and witness from this group, how they handled really the last stretch there?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Just our growth as a team is what I seen, just pretty much from sitting on the sideline. Just from the beginning of the year, even training camp, to the end of the year, the last game last night, just our growth as a team, the steps we took.

Super proud of the guys that they bought into everything that this organization is about, and I'm looking forward to the following years.

Q. What stood out to you about the strides that Shai made this season?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Stood out to me? I mean, there was a ton of stuff. I mean, defensively he took one of the biggest steps I've seen a player take on that side of the ball, but I think the one thing most people don't talk about is his leadership. Just the way he's able to kind of be himself, it affects the other guys.

I mean, you see other guys like JW have great seasons, and I think part of that is kind of Shai's leadership and Shai taking him under his wing.

Q. What about JW? Same sort of question. What

impressed you about what you saw from him from the start to camp to where he finished?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, I was real big on JW even before the season started, but his growth, his confidence from the beginning of the season to the end, I think that was the biggest thing.

And the game slowed down for him and he got super comfortable, and you could see kind of what he's able to do out there. The sky's the limit for him.

Q. Why were you big on him when the season started?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Just playing pickup with him. I knew he was going to be special, just from the pickup games.

Q. Mark has described you multiple times as being the soul of the locker room basically, and after your injury, he said he was curious to see how you would lead when you're not out there on the court and from the sidelines. How do you think you were able to do that?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: I thought I did pretty good. It's super hard when you're not playing just to try to be like a continuous part of the team even when you're not in uniform.

But I know that my five years of being in the NBA that I do have a voice, so I was able to kind of share some pointers and a couple game plan stuff with the guys that translated to the game, so I think overall I did a pretty solid job.

Q. What does it mean to you to be a key leader of this group, that if everything goes like it should, this group should stay together for a long time? What does it mean to you to be a key piece of all of that?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: It means a lot. It means a lot. I hate to compare like situations, but when I signed at TCU, we went 0-18 in the Big 12, and then before I left we went to the tournament.

I'm not saying that I'm a savior or anything, but I feel like kind of what I bring to the table is important.

Looking at the last two years of where we were and just

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how we were able to grow, I couldn't be more proud of the guys and the coaches and this whole organization.

Q. We talk about all the time how you're leader of the team, all that, which is impressive. But with it being such a young team - you're only 28 years old - talk about the challenges that come with you still being a relatively young player yourself trying to lead a group of younger guys.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: That's a good question, man. Yeah, I mean, to everybody on the outside looking in I feel like the old guy on the team. The guys, they call me old, old head. But in reality, I'm 28, so I'm barely in my prime and stuff like that.

But being around like a younger group like this, it kind of brings something out of you. You feel a little younger in a way, and just having a good group of guys like we got, yeah, sky's the limit, man.

Q. You guys are where you are, still a young team that has to learn on the fly, but Mark was also a young coach that had to learn on the fly. Have you seen any areas of growth in his coaching style?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Oh, man, yeah, I definitely seen some areas of growth. Coach Mark from day one here, he's always been pretty much the same. He's had the same mentality every day. He comes here and he shows up, and he pushes us to another level.

I think that him being able to hold everybody on the roster accountable from 1 to 16, even Shai, I think that that's his biggest kind of value that he brings to the team that kind of goes unnoticed, is definitely accountability.

Q. Leadership hasn't changed since you've been here, expectations will be with the next season as a team. You took some major steps, so people will look at you to make another step. Do you have to do anything different in terms of leadership or just the team itself in the off-season?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: No, I don't see we have to do anything different. Just coming in and wanting to get better and getting better and continuing to trust what we got right here and trust the team and just continue to just grow, grow as a team.

We're not going to put any expectations on ourselves. Just going to keep continuing to grow and keep continuing to get better.

Q. Your time at TCU, how much does that make you

appreciate the process and kind of easier to go through something like this when you've already had that experience before?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, man, it definitely does. Just kind of being at the bottom, starting at the bottom, it does something to you. Kind of makes you a little hungry to win.

Once you start winning like we did this year, and just -- man, it's a different feeling. It makes you want to -- it's contagious. It just makes you want to keep winning.

Q. Aaron is a guy that's been compared to you; doing the same things on the court as you. Do you see that comparison, and what do you think about that?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Oh, yeah, yeah. I mean, Wiggs has been great for us, super reliable for us the whole year. We have a lot of similarities. I tell him in his second year he was way far along than I was in my second year.

I'm super happy for Wiggs and his success, and hopefully we can continue to get better.

Q. What did you see from Josh this year with his jump from his rookie season to year two?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: I mean, his growth. His growth as a player. I mean, you could tell the game has also slowed down for him, as well. We challenged him a little more on the defensive side this year, and he accepted the challenge.

But no, it's not a doubt. Just kind of being comfortable. It's about continuing to get better for Josh, and I'm pretty sure he's going to put the work in this summer to do that.

Q. During the season Mark talked about sometimes he'll go with a full-court pressure and sometimes he said it would just be you getting the guys riled up, whether it be Tre or Wiggs. Talk about your relationship with Mark allowing you to be a coach on the floor.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, for sure, man, that's one of the things I'm super thankful for. Super blessed to have a coach like that. It just shows kind of his trust he puts in me, and not only his trust, but the whole coaching staff. They trust me to kind of get the guys going and get them riled up, and I definitely take pride in that. I definitely don't take it for granted, so I'm super thankful.

Q. I know you're itching to get back out on the floor. With your wrist, what's your focus for the off-season and getting back again?

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KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, just kind of take it slow, go through the rehab process. It's a little bit longer than I thought it would be, but just looking forward to just getting back right and being able to get back on the floor and playing with these guys.

Q. What's the thing you missed the most while being out?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Just the competitive side of the game. Just being able to compete, even at practice, in the game. Definitely just being able to compete.

Q. I feel like I asked you last year what's your extracurricular activities during the off-season. I feel like you said fishing, hanging out, stuff like that. Is that still the same? Have you added anything to it this year?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Well, I got a newborn so my hands are going to be full the whole summer, the whole off-season. Other than that it's going to be a slow summer. Just get on the lake a little bit and just chill out.

Q. Lake Hefner?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: No, not Hefner. Probably back home.

Q. Who ended up winning the one-on-one battle between you and Tre?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: I won. I won. He's not going to tell you that, but I won.

Q. My boy, Chauncey, told me to ask you who has -- he said y'all have had a one-on-one battle as well, multiple ones, and he said what's the series count.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Everybody (indiscernible). No, me and Chauncey, we definitely had our battles in college. That's my boy. But I got the best of him.

Q. Talk about Chet this year.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Chet? Super confident. Somebody that believes in himself and his abilities, and he's another guy that's just itching to play. He was itching to play this year. I'm looking forward to playing with Chet for sure just because him being able to be in that back line or the defense and the pressure on the ball a little bit more, knowing we got some repetition in the back back there.

Q. Was it hard not to think about the fact that you have

him waiting in the wings for next year all season? You don't really have anybody like him at all on the roster.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Right. No, it wasn't hard because once you're in the season, you're running with who you got. But in certain games you be like, man, Chet would be big for this game, be important for this game.

But pretty much man, you just roll with who you got and do it.

Q. Last off-season you signed your most comfortable NBA contract. Did that let you play more free this season, knowing that you were more secure?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, man, definitely did. Definitely gave me a good peace of mind knowing that financially my family and I, we're good. Yeah, just kind of security, like a good peace of mind, man, to be honest.

Q. You're one of the few vets on the team. You've had two big rookie classes the last couple years. Are there any interesting rookie duties you've imparted on some of the young guys?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: You know what, the rookies actually had it pretty easy this year. They didn't have to do a lot. All they had to do was to sing on birthdays.

Q. What did you have when you were a rookie?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: I had a lot. I had to get -- Anthony Davis was my vet, so I was making store runs and getting waters and doing a lot, man. Yeah, those guys had it easy this year.

Q. Are you going to try to add something more this season?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, yeah, definitely. Going on year six, I feel like a real true vet, so I'll probably pull some stuff out of my sleeve.

Q. Who had the best rookie season?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Jalen Williams.

Q. What did you see from him this year? He had a slow start, didn't get much of an opportunity. Some of it was injuries, but he had an opportunity and really seemed to seize it as the year went on.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Yeah, he definitely took advantage of the opportunity he had. Early in the season he wasn't playing. Like you said, he was hurt, back and forth to the

G-League, but he got on this stage and he showed what he could do.

We're similar in a lot of things. He's more of a bigger guy, but overall I think we have a lot of similarities just as far as how we approach the game and just knowing where to be, IQ for the game and stuff like that. J-Will, he's going to be a long career in the NBA.

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