

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Aleksej Pokusevski

Press Conference



Q. I know you dealt with injury this season, but what was it like being a part of this group and this season as a whole?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: It's been great, man. This team is special because of how young we are and how good we understand what we got to do to win. We're into that.

Q. What was it like for you just mentally dealing with the ups and downs of the injury that you were dealing with?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: It was pretty tough, but I was inside the team a lot, traveling with the team helped me a lot. Guys were supportive. I feel good.

Q. How is your knee?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Feels good. I'm going to take some time off after the season, then get back here, start working out. I think the injury helped me to understand what I've got to do to be -- what I've got to do to make myself ready every game.

Q. What was the timing of the injury especially frustrating given that you were probably playing the best basketball of your career?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I mean, whenever you have an injury, whether you play good or bad, it's frustrating. I think I was trying to just keep myself calm and understand what I've got to do to try and get back as fast as possible.

Q. What are some of the main things you want to work on this off-season?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Every year is the same, every summer is the same. I want to get stronger. I want to try and be able to guard all the positions. This year I was on the 5, and I have like an option now, so wherever Coach puts me I want to be able to do the work.

Q. What was the thing you missed the most when you

were out?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Being around the guys after the game, even if it's a loss or a win, being able to be on the plane with the guys. That's the thing I missed the most.

Q. Where do you plan to spend most of the off-season?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I'm going to be back and forth. I'm going to be here for a long time working out. I'm going to go back home some. I'm going to try and take the best out of this summer.

Q. Is it Serbia or Greece that's home?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: It's Serbia and Greece. I'm going back and forth. It's pretty close, like an hour and 15 with a plane.

Q. What's it been like to play for Mark over the past couple years?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I mean, he's an unbelievable person as a whole. If you're struggling he's going to be there. He's a great coach, obviously. When you're a player of him, it's easy because he puts you in the right position. The only thing you've got to do is compete.

Q. How close did you get with Chet, and what is he like off the court?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: So obviously he and I, we were injured for the most part of the season. We got pretty close, and I can't wait to work out during the summer with him and start the season up.

Q. What excites you the most about his game and what he can bring to the table next season?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: His length and being able to compete. He's a guy that really wants to play inside the team and help the team win. I'm sure he's going to do whatever he needs to do.

Q. Was it a tough adjustment to play more of the 5 this year?



ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: No. I mean, I haven't played 5 before. It was pretty tough for me just to understand. Preseason games helped me a lot and the training camp, just understanding what I've got to do on defense, like playing drop and having a feeling for that. But I think offensively especially like playing with guys that I play with, it's pretty easy.

Q. In your rookie season you were one of the younger players in the league and you went to the Blue, came back to the Thunder. I wanted to ask you about your evaluation of Ousmane Dieng.

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Yeah, he's young, he's a talented guy, a good guy. I think he's going to do great in this league. I'm trying to follow up with him here and there. I think he's going to get better this summer. The only thing for him is just to keep working. He's going to show up.

Q. What was it like being Shai's teammate and kind of seeing him progress and then you see him now go to the All-Star Game and things like that?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I mean, it's crazy that you think about the way he plays, he's still getting better, and there's a lot of room that he can improve, and he knows that -- he's the guy that stays less on the court every time he shots the ball and keeps getting better.

I'm happy to have him. We all are happy to have him in this organization. I'm sure he's going to bring a lot to this team in the future.

Q. You came in, you didn't have an off-season after getting drafted, then you have the shortest off-season in NBA history after that, and then you have an actual four-month off-season. How much of that was a benefit to you just having that long extended off-season?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I think it helped me a lot, especially because I could understand the work I should put in. Just mentally being in the right place and knowing that this is what you have to do to get better, and everything is controllable, so it's nothing crazy. You keep your head down and work, you've just got to show up sometime.

Q. Which one do you prefer, the shorter or longer off-season?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Longer, so I can take my time off, get some good food back home with my mom. I think the off-season is when a player gets better, where players are made.

Q. Talking about long off seasons, what is one part of your game that you want to see grow the most this off-season?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Playing off the catch and not just like -- being able to shoot, of course, but when you're able to shoot, people are going to close out to you more, so I want to be able to play with the ball dribbling, getting to the rim more, and that's going to come with physicality, but I'm just going to work on that, too.

Q. I know you were talking about you have two homes, Serbia and Greece. Which one do you enjoy more?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I enjoy both the same. My family is in Serbia. My girlfriend is from Greece. I've been in Greece for six years. It's a special place for me. I enjoy both of these places.

Q. How do you approach this off-season and next season knowing that it's already your fourth year and the last year of your rookie contract?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: The same as the last one. I'm going to get better, and I'm going to be ready for the season. That's the only thing I'm thinking about so when I get back here and we have training camp, I want to be ready and physically in the right place and mentally in the right place.

Q. Does it feel like it's gone by fast? You're still just 21.

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: It's going so fast that I don't understand, like, how am I 21?

Q. You're extension eligible; is that anything that's on your mind?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I mean, the only thing that I've got to do is play basketball, work hard and enjoy. This organization respects that, they show that, and they respect who you are. They recognize that. I'm not worried about it at all.

Q. What's it like being part of such a young group? You're all young players kind of learning the NBA, growing together, growing kind of more cohesive --

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: It's fun because people are like -- this team is going to go this way, and we are just keeping our heads down, listening to the people that are in the organization because it showed like they're the best. I think this group is going to go pretty far.

Q. What's your go-to meal back home?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: There are a lot of different meals, but my grandma is cooking pretty good, so whatever she cooks, Serbian food.

Q. Is there anywhere around here even close that you can get Serbian food --

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: I'm so excited. No. That's probably the biggest challenge for me over here.

Q. What do you like here in Oklahoma?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: People. They are the best. People around the city. I've been around the States and I haven't seen better people.

Q. What about food-wise?

ALEKSEJ POKUSEVSKI: Steaks are pretty good. There's some good steakhouses. When my girlfriend is here, she's helping me out with the food. She's pretty good.

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