

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Josh Giddey

Press Conference



Q. What was it like to get so close to the Playoffs? You guys were one game away from the Playoffs, but then to lose that game.

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, obviously a tough way to end it. You come off such a high in New Orleans where we did so many things right, and you see what it takes to win a playoff game.

As I said, we did so many things right and we win the game by three points.

I think the game in Minnesota, we just didn't come out the right way. We didn't start the game the way we needed to against a talented team that's been there before.

They knew what it took to win that type of game, and I think on the night they were just better than us. There's no excuses for that, but I think it's a great learning experience for our group because obviously that's where we want to continue to be going forward.

Guys will learn from it, but obviously a tough way to end the year.

Q. You made a pretty big jump from year one to year two. Did that Pelicans game feel like a culmination of all the work that you've done?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, it did a little bit. It was obviously such a high stake game that guys wanted to come out there and do whatever we needed to do to win the game.

But yeah, the work that you do in the summer, throughout the year leads up to moments like that at the end of the season when you need to win those type of games.

As I said, it's a good -- when you lose it's a good learning experience because that's obviously where as a team we want to win to get to, and the more of those games we play in, the better we'll be in them.

Q. Every game this season you've focused on getting

better with each game. Now that you have a full 84-game cumulative look, what are you most proud of the growth that you've made this year?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I'd say as a young team, it's easy throughout a season to -- we had a bunch of winning streaks, a bunch of losing streaks. It's easy to get separated when things get tough, and I think the best part about this team is we came together even more when we weren't winning games and when we went on -- I think out of the All-Star break we lost five in a row, and we came into practice the next day like we'd won five in a row.

I think the best part about this group is we put the past in the past. Previous games don't matter. We move forward. Yeah, the morale is always high around the team, and I think through an 82-game season it has to be that way. You can't ride all the highs and lows otherwise the mood swings you feel are a lot to handle.

Yeah, the way we conducted ourselves throughout the season I think was impressive for such a young group, and that's what we need to continue to do moving forward.

Q. For you and your game personally, you were playing with a lot of force and just kind of punch offensively getting downhill looking for those looks. How important was that for you and your game and your growth this season?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I mean, spent a lot of time the last off-season just lifting, getting stronger, so I think trying to use that to my advantage. Obviously being a bigger guard, trying to continue getting into the paint and making plays, whether that's score, kick the ball out, just making the right read.

Yeah, I started to figure out that I'm typically going to be a lot bigger than the guys that are guarding me, so trying to use that to my advantage. But yeah, that's something that I'm going to continue to do this summer, get stronger, work on those things, so going forward into next season something I'm going to try and win it.

Q. Between last year and even at the beginning of this season we were asking you and Shai a lot about how you guys fit together and everything like that, and that's not even like a question now and it turns out that

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it was probably a dumb question then. What do you make of how that partnership has sort of evolved and how you guys have just gotten so comfortable playing alongside each other?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I mean, I said last year, I said those type of things with two guys that are pretty ball dominant, they take time; it doesn't happen overnight.

As you've seen, it's gotten better from last year and game by game this year, just getting more comfortable with each other, getting more acclimated with each other's games, and that chemistry will continue to grow as time goes on and as we play together more.

I love playing with him. He's obviously one of the best players in the league. To share the backcourt with him is great.

But as a young team I think we've all done a really good job of bonding together, on and off the court, which does -- the off the court stuff really does translate on the floor. I think we're such a tight group, I think that really does help us on the floor.

In regards to me and Shai, I think that chemistry has continued to get better throughout the year. We've both learned how to be better off the ball, how to make things happen when it's not in our hands, whether that's cutting or spacing the floor for each other.

As I said, it's never about two players. It's all about the five that are out there. This team has continued to get better and chemistry has continued to grow.

Q. You're one of the few guys who's seen live game action with Chet. How excited are you to get him back?

JOSH GIDDEY: Very. I was working out with him throughout the summer playing pickup and then played Summer League with him. Obviously was very excited to play this year with him, but injuries happen as part of sport, and he's done a great job of rehabbing, doing all the right things, and he looks good.

I know he's going to have a good summer, and come this time next year I know -- sorry, come September, October next year he'll be ready to go.

Q. You mentioned using your size more. Did something click for you this season to say, I need to start using my size more?

JOSH GIDDEY: Nothing -- I always knew I was pretty big,

but just getting stronger. I think I put a heavy emphasis on lifting and getting stronger in the weight room, and then throughout the summer and throughout playing pickup games and preseason and Summer League trying to test that out and seeing how it felt.

In Summer League I could feel myself getting a little bit stronger, so coming into the year I had that confidence that I could get downhill and be able to hold my own down there. I think a lot of the confidence stems from lifting in the off-season and doing little things like that.

But yeah, just understanding that, as I said, I'm typically going to be bigger than the guys that are guarding me, so trying to use that to my advantage.

Q. What are some things that you want to work on and improve on this off-season?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, shooting the ball is a big one that I'm continuing to work on. Obviously we made a jump from last season, but still nowhere near where it needs to be. Getting stronger. I think defensively continuing to take another step in the right direction. Ball handling.

So there's a lot of things, especially as a 20-year-old, that you have to work on in your game. There's so much room for growth. There's a lot of things I'll be working on this summer and hopefully continue to make strides on next season.

Q. Speaking of shooting, what was the toughest thing about retooling your jump shot? You shot that way for your whole life and then you have to make a quick change. Was it the mental aspect or was it the actual mechanics?

JOSH GIDDEY: A bit of both. I think when you try and change something that you've been doing your whole life it's like breaking out of any bad habit. They don't happen quick. It takes time.

For me at the start it was frustrating because I wanted the results straightaway, but you have to understand when you break out of a habit it takes time and it doesn't work that way that it clicks overnight and everything will be different.

I think for me, the early days with Chip and Mike, even in California in the summer, I was getting so worried about the results and the outcome right there that it was distracting me from the process and how those type of things -- how long those type of things take.

Even earlier in the season I really struggled to shoot the ball and I was in my own head, but then Chip kept

reinforcing, Mike kept reinforcing that these things take time. I think once I learnt that and once I stopped worrying about the immediate result and thinking more long term and the outcomes from the process, I think that's when a switch really flipped and things started heading in a better direction for me.

As I said, those things take time. But yeah, when you're trying to break out of a bad habit, it doesn't happen overnight.

Q. Your name has been mentioned with some of the greatest players of all time, but now Shai's name is being mentioned with some of the greatest players of all time, some of the best seasons of all time. What's it like to see his name being mentioned with guys that you probably looked up to?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I mean, it speaks to obviously the leap he took from last year to this year. I mean, he was a borderline All-Star last year and then he took a massive leap this year and led our team to where we got to.

Yeah, obviously he'll tell you that the individual stuff doesn't bother him, but the load he carried for this team this year was huge. And I think he leads by example. Guys follow his lead, and it's such a powerful thing.

I think another thing that he took a big step defensively this year, I thought he was much better at that end of the floor, and as I said, that's powerful for the group. When your best player is locked in on that end of the floor, it sends a message to the team that we're not relaxing on defense. We're here to get stops and guys really get locked in.

He took a big step, and I'm sure he's going to try and do the same thing coming in next year.

Q. Shai mentioned that the team is so close because pretty much it's a bunch of kids growing together. How refreshing is it to be in a group where guys have similar interests, similar age range?

JOSH GIDDEY: It's great. That's what makes our team so close. Everyone is a very similar age. When I first got in here I was 18, 19, and a lot of the other guys were 21, 22. It was great coming into a team where it was a young group.

And I think, as I said earlier, the chemistry off the court translates on to the floor. We're such a tight group on the road, on the plane. You spend so much time together it's naturally going to be that way. Yeah, I think the tightness of this group is going to help us in the long run and going forward.

Q. Do you want to play for Team Australia this summer?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I'm playing.

Q. Have you played with the senior team yet?

JOSH GIDDEY: When I was 16 was my only time. I haven't played since then.

Q. What would that mean to you to represent them in the World Cup?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, it's exciting. It's always been a dream of mine to play for my country on the biggest stage, and I think missing out on the Olympic team two years or last year was obviously tough.

I wanted to be there with them. To see them win their first medal ever for Australian basketball was a great moment.

This summer we've got as much talent as basketball has ever had in Australia, so I think it's probably going to be the most realistic chance we ever had to win a gold medal at a big major event, so look forward to it.

Q. You've got to watch out for the Canadians.

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I know. I'll be talking to them about it.

Q. You still don't know where you'll be playing actually for World Cup? There's like three venues.

JOSH GIDDEY: I think it's in Japan, the Philippines, and one other country.

Q. Which country would you like to go?

JOSH GIDDEY: I would love to go to Japan.

Q. Mark will never take credit for anything you guys do on the floor, but J-Dub, Shai, and other guys have mentioned how he's the head of the snake and you guys remained poised throughout the whole season especially considering you guys were the youngest team in the NBA. What is it about him that allows you guys to follow that leadership because a lot of young teams just don't follow the leadership from their coach.

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, he is the head of the snake. He's what we're doing here, and I think his composure and you always seen, he's always very level headed. When games are close or whatever is happening on the floor, he's

always remained calm.

I think that sends a message to the team to kind of keep that same level headedness on the floor, and he's such a smart -- for such a young coach, he's such a smart coach. I think guys love to play with him. He's a real player's coach. He gives you freedom, within reason. He's honest with you. For me, I love playing for him.

Ever since I came in here, he was honest with me from the start about how he coached, and I was honest with him about how I liked to be coached, and we got on the same page really early.

To have a good relationship with your coach like that is important because as a ball handler you have to be an extension of him on the floor, so we trust each other, and yeah, I love playing for him.

Q. You guys are a young team that has to learn on the fly but he's also a young coach that has to learn on the fly. Have you noticed any major growths in his coaching style?

JOSH GIDDEY: I mean, for me, as I've said, when I first came in, he was honest from the start about how he coached, and I think for the two years, the best part about it is that's exactly what he told me, what he told me is exactly what I've got.

I think he was obviously Coach of the Year finalist. Sort of speaks to how much of an impact he's had on this group. I think you look at the players that have taken leaps, but I think you've got to give a lot of credit to him for what he's done with this team. To have one of the youngest teams in the league headed in the right direction like we are, he's such a big part of it, and I think guys love playing for him. Guys trust him. When he talks most importantly guys listen.

Yeah, he's the leader of what we're doing and I love to play for him, and I know all the guys do, too.

Q. In his tenure here so far, it's seemed like he's a defensive guy, but this year the offense took a huge leap. What was that process like for you, especially being an extension of him on the floor?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, he's very high IQ. Off bench, I think out of time-outs, out of when we run our first play of the game or whatever it is, he is always drawing something up that's good, that's really good and effective, and he understands how to get guys going.

If a guy is struggling or whatever it is, he understands

which buttons to push and how to get guys involved within the offense. Extremely smart, extremely high IQ, and I think, as I said, a lot of the success we had this year, you give credit to him.

Q. You're very passionate talking about him. Is this a coaching style that's been new to you or are you used to these type of things, or what is it?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, I mean, it's different -- obviously every coach you have is different. No coach is going to be the same. But for me this is the coach that I've always -- if I could build a coach, it's Mark. He lets me play freely. He's honest with me. He gives me feedback, criticism, and for me I don't take none of it personally.

When he gets on me I look at it from a point of he wants me to be to be better, he wants me to improve. That's a relationship you need to have with your coach, because if you're taking things personally every time you're yelled at, you're not going to better from it.

He's great with me in that sense. As I said, from day one I've loved playing for him, and looking forward to next year and many years after that.

Q. What are your thoughts on J-Dub just from his arrival throughout the season and his continuous improvement?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, he was great, obviously improved a lot from day one to where we are at the end of the year. Made big strides. He took on a much bigger role in the back half of the year than he did at the start, but to fit in the way he did with our group, he was basically our 4 man for a lot of the season.

He took on a big responsibility on the defensive end, as well. The leaps he took month by month were great, and he's going to continue to get better.

Q. What was that like to work with Chip throughout the season?

JOSH GIDDEY: Great. I love Chip. I'm with Chip pretty much every day. I've been with him since he got hired here all the way through to today. Yeah, he's been great for me. He's obviously been doing this for a number of years now, so he's worked with some of the best players in the league. I obviously trust him with my shot and listen to him with whatever he has to say. So he's been great, and we are going to have another good summer together.

Q. To follow up on that, you mentioned one of the things you wanted to adjust with the thumb flick that

you've eliminated. Over the course of the summer, any more mechanical things that you and Chip are looking to add, or is it more just repetition at this point?

JOSH GIDDEY: A bit of both. That'll be for Chip to tell me. We'll get back together in a couple weeks and start that process up again.

The good thing about the summer is that there's no game, so there's no pressure for me to have to go into games and knock down shots straightaway.

We can fine tune different things. He can change things that he sees and there's no pressure for me to go out there and knock down shots straightaway.

The thing I've learnt I can miss 100 shots in a row but as long as I stick with the process, over time I know the outcomes are going to be favorable.

Chip is a smart guy, and I trust him with his work.

Q. You seem like a businessman. I know you're really young, so you're probably not thinking about business deals and after your career and all that stuff, but is there anything business-wise that you may look towards in the future?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, when I retire I want to be a GM or an owner or something of a team. I have been business minded since I was a young kid, but when you start making real money you start to think more in that direction.

So yeah, when I finish playing, whoever knows when that'll be -- right now it could change in 15 years or whatever -- but right now if I had to retire today, I'd want to be a GM or an owner of a team.

Q. Would it be an NBA team or would you go back to Australia?

JOSH GIDDEY: I mean, it's a long way away so I couldn't tell you right now. But yeah, I honestly haven't thought that far ahead. Just anything to do with running a business is something that's always interested me.

Q. How much does it mean that Mark trusts you to be that inbounder nine times out of ten and kind of initiate that? How much does that mean to you?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, a lot. It speaks to him and our relationship and the trust he has in me. Obviously we've developed some good out-of-bounds plays and things to get guys looks, so it's a credit to him. He draws all those plays up and all I've got to do is deliver the pass.

Yeah, give a lot more credit to him than you do to me for those.

Q. You talked about how to manage low post you had some smaller mismatches on guys like CJ and other guys with the Wolves. Is that something that you're looking to add to your game, is like a low post presence, because you see a lot of the best passers in the league like a Jokic, Sabonis play out of that area?

JOSH GIDDEY: It is. We started posting up a little more in the second half just recognizing mismatches on different teams, and when they're trying to keep match-ups, we're trying to get switches and take them to the block.

A lot of the times if it's a smaller guy they're going to have to send double-teams, which allows us to play four on three on the back side. Yes, that's something that I want to work on this summer, just getting more comfortable in that. Obviously I never really posted up prior to this year, so just getting comfortable on the block, being able to make the right read, and I think for a guy like myself that loves to pass, it's a good place to be because if I've got a smaller guy on me and they don't send a double, then hopefully I'm able to get into the paint and score, but if they do, being able to find the open man.

Q. What did it mean for you to have your sister here playing at SMU, being a little closer this season?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, it was great. She moved in with me, so she's got a room in my house and she's there pretty much all the time. To have family around when the rest of my family is on the other side of the world is great.

I went to a few of her games; she comes to pretty much all of our games. She was at both these play-in games, so it's great to have her around.

Q. You want to be a GM; what would you do this off-season?

JOSH GIDDEY: With our team?

Q. Yeah.

JOSH GIDDEY: You leave that to Sam Presti, the best in the business.

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