

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Josh Giddey

Press Conference



Q. Josh, is there anything substantial that you can tell us about your relationship with SGA and how it's changed over time and what it feels like now playing with him?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, obviously coming in as a rookie, we're both two guys that are better with the ball in our hands. That's not a secret. We had to learn to kind of play off each other and learn to be better off the ball, and I think over two years it's gotten a lot better.

I think it was tough early on because, as I said, we were both better with the ball in our hands and we were used to having it for 80, 90 percent of the game. Now especially -- and Dub is here, Lu is here, Chet is coming in, so we've got a lot of guys that can make plays with the ball in their hand.

As a team, not just me and Shai, but we've got to learn to be cutters, screeners, and it takes sacrifice on a team like we've got that you're not going to have the ball every possession; you've got to be willing to do things that don't show up on the stat sheet to get your teammates looks and to make the game easier for everybody else.

To answer your question, it's getting way better. I think it's improved a lot from my rookie year to where it is now, and I think it'll only get better as we continue to play more games.

Q. You're one of the guys that paved the way for MBL's next stars and it's growing and they've got five, six, seven guys that could be drafted this year. Do you have contact with those guys, and what are your thoughts on that program and how it prepares those guys to be drafted and have success in the NBA?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, it's an awesome program. It started with just American kids coming out, skipping college and choosing the MBL pathway, and then me and Mojave King were the first two Australian-born players to go through that program, and since then, you've seen it really take off.

It's proven to be a legitimate pathway, and you're getting some of the best kids from here and then from Europe and around the world that are coming to the NBL to take that stepping stone to the NBA, and you see Alex Sarr who's going to be a top-5 pick this year who could have gone just about anywhere in the world and chose to come to the NBL, so it's really proving to be a legitimate pathway, and I'm trying to play my part.

You guys know I'm a huge advocate for the NBL but I try to play my part in helping recruit Next Stars and not convincing but talking to guys about pros and cons of moving to Australia, and there's a lot more pros than there is cons, but just keeping in touch with some of them, and the kid Trent Flowers, the kid at Adelaide, I had a bit to do with early on in helping him, and I could speak from experience because I played at Adelaide, so that was easy to kind of talk with him on that.

Yeah, just keep my fingertips on the NBL is something that I want to do, and I'm a huge advocate for kids taking that pathway.

Q. You're a guy who does initiate offense and makes a lot of plays. What can Chet give you guys in terms of a pick-and-roll partner, pick-and-pop guy, just his versatility there?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, just exactly that. He's been very versatile. I think he can stretch the floor for us. He drags bigs out of the paint, which is going to be huge for us, and he's a lob threat. He plays above the rim.

It sounds cliché, but he does do it all, he can handle the ball. When he gets a rebound, he's a guy that can take it up the floor himself and handle it. He's going to bring a new dynamic to our team, not just offensively but defensively, while he protects the rim in my opinion as well as anybody in the league. He's elite on that end of the floor, and he's going to provide us with a lot of different ways that we can play different lineups with him out there.

He's going to be a massive addition to our team, and excited to play with him.

Q. You were talking a little bit about moving without the ball, having so many ball handlers on the floor at



the same time. Last year it looked like a point of emphasis, getting to the rim a little bit more. At the FIBA tournament you were getting to the rim and getting fouled. Was that a point of emphasis this year?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, massive point. I think that was a big thing in my first two years that I struggled with was getting to the foul line. I thought there was a lot of times instead of getting all the way to the rim I'd settle for a floater or something like that, so I made a big point at the World Cup to put pressure on the rim and get fouled and put pressure on the refs to make those calls, and I think I did a good job with that, but it's a different game, the FIBA one to the NBA.

Whether it'll translate we'll see, but yeah, that is a big point of emphasis is try to get all the way to the rim, put pressure on it, put pressure on the refs to blow the whistle and send me to the line.

Q. To expand on that a little bit, what was gained from your experience this summer in addition to that, just being in the role you were in, the top scorer for Australia, and being in games with that much pressure on you?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, they're the type of games I love. It was something I wanted to do for a long time was play in the World Cup and represent my country, and was very, very fortunate to do that.

Obviously taking on a big responsibility with the team and having to lead those guys from the point guard spot, things did not work out the way we wanted to. We didn't finish the tournament anywhere close to where we would have hoped coming in, and I put a lot of that responsibility on myself as the point guard of the team.

A lot of the job is on me to make guys' jobs easier, and I think I didn't do a good enough job.

I thought it was a good learning experience. I'm going to have hopefully a long international career, and that was my first ever taste at it.

There's a lot to learn from it. There's a lot of good, a lot of bad from it, but fortunately for us Paris Olympics is in eight, nine months, so we don't have to wait three years for the next big tournament, which is a really good thing, and I'm excited for that, and I know the guys will be ready. Hopefully we can finish better than we did at the World Cup.

Q. Last year at this time a lot of questions about your

shot and shooting in general. Where do you feel that aspect of your game is right now?

JOSH GIDDEY: I think it's good. I think the big thing for me was just confidence with it, and working with a guy like Chip every day, we've been together since he got here up to this point pretty much every day we're together.

He's just instilled a lot of confidence in me. I think the big emphasis he put on was not trying to come into the season proving that I'm a shooter. I think it was a balance last year of taking the right ones, shooting the open ones, not coming in with the mindset that I have to get up a bunch of threes to change the narrative on my shooting.

That's one of the big things for me coming into this year is I'm not just going to go out there blazing away to try and change a perception, but take the right ones; if it's not there, drive the ball, pass the ball. I'm a smart player; I can make the right read, and if the three is there, I'll take it, but I'm not going to come out blazing away to try and show to everybody that I've been working on it all summer and that I've turned into Steph Curry in the last four months.

As I said, it's definitely improved. Confidence was a big thing. But I feel like it's heading in the right direction.

Q. I have two questions about the World Cup experience. What did you think of Japan team? Even though you guys beat them, after that actually they did start winning. And what was your impression of Japan because you said you wanted to go to Japan for the World Cup. If you tried Japanese food, what was your favorite?

JOSH GIDDEY: A lot of questions to remember. Japan, first off, their team was great, and we got to play them -- anytime you get to play a team in their home country, it's very fun. The crowd was unbelievable. It was the best crowd and the loudest crowd I've ever played in. It was a smaller stadium but the seats were packed to the brim and the fans were awesome. We were up 25 and Japan scored, and I looked at the scoreboard, the crowd was so loud, I thought it was a two-point game. That's how into it they were. An awesome atmosphere, and they made the game really fun.

Going to Japan was a lot of fun, somewhere I had on my bucket list to go to, and the weather was awesome, beaches were great. I ate a lot of Japanese food, a lot of sushi over that three-, four-week period, so it was definitely somewhere I wanted to get to.

Did I answer everything?

Q. You talked about your increased role or maybe not increased but your permanent role for team Australia in FIBA leading those guys on and off the court, but another thing is your leadership role that you took on. What was it like being a younger player on that team and taking on that leadership role?

JOSH GIDDEY: Yeah, it's different because you come to Australia and those guys, Paddy, Joe, they've been the leaders for the last 15 years and they've been running a system that I haven't been a part of because I never played on that team.

I think it's not easy to come in and try and be a bigger voice than those two. As I said, they've been doing it for so long; they're the leaders of the team. They set the bar and everyone meets that.

But as a point guard you have to have a voice, and it's your responsibility to make sure everybody out on the floor is on the same page, and as I said, I think I try to do the best that I could, but it was just I think I fell short in that aspect of trying to get everybody to come together, get on the same page, and a lot of that's on me. As the point guard you've got to take responsibility for that and ownership on that, and I do, and I think, as I said, Paris is so close, and I'm champing to get back out there and represent my country again and do it right this time.

We played hard. We did everything coaches asked and we asked of each other, but just small details in a World Cup can really mess up the tournament, and we found that out the hard way, unfortunately.

I'm very excited to get back out there and take on a role on that team that can hopefully get us back up on to the podium.

Q. As the Australian spokesman here, what can you tell us about Jack White?

JOSH GIDDEY: You guys will love him. He's awesome. A guy that plays with a lot of energy, makes the right play, makes the game easy for his teammates, will do the things that don't show up on the stat sheet. But he's awesome. We played against each other when I was a rookie in the NBL in Adelaide and he was in Melbourne, and he was the guy you didn't want to play against.

He's the guy you'd love to have on your team. Brings a lot of things that -- he does a lot of things that typically guys don't want to do like diving on the floor, setting screens, all the little hustle things. So you guys are going to love him. He's awesome. He can really shoot the ball, and he's going to be a hell of a player for a long time.