

Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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Vasilije Micic

Press Conference



Q. Obviously there's been reports about you and the Thunder having open communication the last few summers. What made this year right for you?

VASILIJE MICIC: First of all, hello, everyone. I would say common desire, I would say. First of all, two years ago we had a very serious conversation. After that, I felt like I needed to prove something more for myself in Europe, and this summer finally everything settled well.

And as I said, I wanted to come somewhere that someone knows me and someone really wanted me, and this is what happened this summer.

Q. For the fans here who haven't seen you play, haven't sat down and watched any film in Euroleague, kind of explain who are the players that they're getting, your strengths, what you think you bring to this organization.

VASILIJE MICIC: Personally I'm trying to be obviously consistent. This is something that I believe is very difficult in sports because there are a lot of talented players, but I would say consistency is something that is most valuable but also the most difficult.

That's something that was well known for me in Europe in terms of my game, individually and basketball-wise. I'm trying to create for others as a point guard and also trying to be capable of shooting three-point shots and reaching the paint, but trying to improve my weaknesses, as well, too.

Q. Just back to the timing question of you coming over, was there another summer where you thought maybe it was going to happen? Take us further into the decision to why the time was right this time.

VASILIJE MICIC: Honestly this was last summer I was looking for NBA because I felt like I'm 29 years old, and still I feel very excited about basketball and enthusiastic.

But after this summer I would not think obviously to

consider NBA because I felt like reaching out the highest level in Europe is very hard, too, staying there and being able to play on that level is very, very difficult thing. I was very happy there, too.

But I'm very happy that this finally happened because I've been honestly working for nine years to reach NBA, so I think it was worth it.

Q. Were there any talks with the Sixers when they held your draft rights of you coming over to play for them?

VASILIJE MICIC: No, I never talked to them.

Q. Being a superstar in Europe, Euroleague MVP and now coming here, how do you approach maybe having a lesser role or kind of having less name recognition in the NBA?

VASILIJE MICIC: Of course I'm aware of that, and the reality that I'm facing to here with such talented players that they have already, or we have.

But at the same time, so far in my life, nothing was given to me, and nothing was easy to reach. Besides that, I'm very happy to accept everything what comes to me. I already spoke about that with coach and everyone here, so it's not a problem for me to adjust.

Q. As someone that's played on a bunch of different stages internationally and I presume watched some NBA basketball, is there something you've identified that's very different between the leagues and is there anyone you've talked to that's tried to make it more simple?

VASILIJE MICIC: For me, my personal experience is definitely physicality here and also the individual potential. That's the biggest difference.

But team-wise, Europe you really can face a good basketball. Like people knows how to play basketball. From the mentally we are all set up well in Europe. We definitely grow up working on a lot of individual skills, but team-wise I think we are also very well educated.

But here, the biggest transition that I've felt so far is the physicality, the athleticism from the players, and that's

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something that I will have to move to adjust.

Q. I assume you've been following the organization from afar. You've seen how the team has developed. What's been your impression of the Thunder and the team and the organization from overseas?

VASILJE MICIC: Before I came, I've heard many positive things from the other people, especially from Serbians who were already in the NBA about the organization. They all had very positive comments and opinions. I'm completely on the same page with them.

I think this organization, it's a very, very good organization in terms of facility, the approach to the players, starting from the gym with trying to do his best and then coaches. I feel every day when I come to the gym that everybody does their best that day.

It kind of gives you extra motivation, too. And then the players, they are so humble, they are so competitive and ready to work, that also can give me additional boost even though I'm a little bit older to them that's the main thing.

Q. You've come to a team that's pretty loaded in the backcourt with Shai and Dort and Giddey. Was that a turnoff or was that a challenge you wanted to jump on board and get in with those guys?

VASILJE MICIC: I was looking merely to reach out a good way of entering the NBA. That was my main key.

And when I have that conversation with the agent and people from the organization, I just told them I don't need any prompts. I just want somebody to want me, and that's what they showed to me, and at that point I will try to do my best and fight for my position like every other player here.

This is hard work in this case. Of course I know there are other players, too, not only those two or three that you mentioned, but we all have rights to hope for the best.

Q. K-Rich was in here earlier and said he's given you a nickname Vava. Do you like that nickname? Do you approve of it? Do you have any other nicknames you'd like to be called?

VASILJE MICIC: That nickname is first time I've heard in my life. (Laughter). But it's nice. If they like to call me like that, it's okay. Whatever is easy for them. I don't mind. My name is hard to pronounce. Whatever easy comes to them, it's okay. In the game it's hard to find the name of players.

Q. It doesn't have anything to do with on the

basketball floor. How do you arrive at jersey No. 29?

VASILJE MICIC: My favorite jersey number is 22, but a few days before I got -- not a few days, a few weeks before the signed deal, already they drafted Wallace, so he took it. And already I feel like I'm 29 years old, so I just want to have this number. Nothing special.

Q. In the NBA rookies typically have tasks they have to do, carry bags, whatever veterans ask for. As a 29 year old guy are you prepared -- do you think you'll have to go through some of that as a rookie?

VASILJE MICIC: I think they will not do that with me. I hope. I'm too old for everything. But if it's necessary, I will do it, no problem. It's part of the game.

Q. You are 29, and this is a team, despite a lot of guys have been here a while, still very young. Do you see yourself getting with Kenrich Williams and sort of becoming a leaguer just because of your age and your veteran status?

VASILJE MICIC: Whenever I was playing and wherever I was playing I never tried to be so vocal in terms of communication, but I was trying always to be an example in terms of my work ethic and some education and passion for the game. That's something I can bring everywhere, like here, too.

I think they have already good leadership from Shai, too. He's very humble guy and very vocal and great worker, so I don't think I have to do anything extra or additional that I already haven't done in my career.

But if they like something about me and my game, I'm more than happy to share my experience with them.

Q. You've obviously reached the highest of the highs of the leagues you've played in, won championships, et cetera. I find it fascinating that you were there and you could have cruised. You could have just continued and just had a great career and had the best life ever, but at 29 you decide, I'm going to go start over, I'm going to challenge myself with a different thing, similar but not the same. Is it exciting to you? Is it fun to you? A new country, a new city, everything new at 29. Tell us what that's like from your standpoint.

VASILJE MICIC: I mean, just a great explanation. That's from the outside how I felt, too, but inside I felt like I needed to do something, even though I had a few years left in my contract in Istanbul, Turkey, which is one of the best countries to live, cities, and everything was settled for

me there.

But I feel like somehow I've got to challenge myself once again, and I feel like that I said to the coach, too, I can be maybe this year the most excited guy on the court even though I'm older than that.

Yeah, that's the main thing that drives me. When you reach some level of success over there, you kind of want to spread your potential out, and I feel this call came on time. As I said, if I didn't get this one, I would probably stay there until the end.

But with the conditions that they gave me and with the respect they gave me so far from Thunder, I feel like it's more than enough for me to come and challenge myself.

Q. What's your first impressions of the talent on this team, the young guys and Shai and the rest of the guys?

VASILIJE MICIC: I think our team in general is unorthodoxly talented compared to others that I've seen in the Summer League. I think each position player can do everything, like even Chet can play point guard, which is very impressive for me.

But I think their skill, their capability of scoring is really on another level. But of course when the real time comes, I think it's also a lot about some individual approach and adjustments in defense. But yeah, in the practices so far my first impression is how talented they are, ready to play, each player.

Q. Oklahoma City is not Istanbul. What have been your first impressions of the city? What have you learned about it and some of the places you've seen?

VASILIJE MICIC: I'm happy, honestly. I don't need so much distraction while I'm playing, so I'm kind of low key while I'm playing, so I have more than enough things here to do. With Pokusevski together, I'm fine.

Q. Are you a good cook? He said he misses Serbian food.

VASILIJE MICIC: His family is here, so they are cooking everything. We are full.

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