

# Oklahoma City Thunder Media Conference

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## Chet Holmgren

Press Conference



**Q. Chet, after going through this experience, playing all 82 but also the playoffs, how valuable do you feel like everything you've gone through this season is for you personally?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I feel like it's been extremely valuable. I like to take all the lessons, the good and the bad, the wins and the losses, and try to make the most of them. Going into the summer, that's the plan.

**Q. We were just talking about Shai and a couple of the guys, and they were saying just how fun this season was, how connected this group was. From your perspective, how much joy was there just between this group, both on and off the floor?**

CHET HOLMGREN: It's hard to put in words. I haven't been on a bunch of different teams in my career, but you can definitely feel -- even if you don't know what the other side is like, you can definitely feel this is a special, special team, special locker room, with a lot of special guys in it. Everybody cares for each other and wants to see each other win, and we're all willing to sacrifice for the better of the whole team. I think that's a perfect recipe to have fun and enjoy it.

**Q. Same recipe from building after a loss, that you wanted the pain to go towards an investment for the future? How much are you going to use that feeling to weaponize that?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I don't want to have that feeling all summer, but I'm definitely going to remember, if that makes sense. Whenever you use, that's definitely added motivation to work harder, to be better. If it's not, then you just don't really have your mindset on winning.

**Q. What did you learn from the playoffs different than what you learned in the 82 games?**

CHET HOLMGREN: Differently?

**Q. Yeah, what do you know now that you didn't know**

**going into the postseason?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I guess I know what it's like to go through it. It's one thing for somebody to say, oh, it's going to be more physical; it's going to be -- the game is going to be slower. People can say whatever they want to say about the playoffs until you actually play in them.

Same thing like playing in the NBA. Somebody can talk to you about it all day long, but unless you've actually done it, you don't really know exactly what to expect, how to handle it, how to adjust as things are happening. I feel like I have a good sense of what that's like now.

**Q. What do you expect next season?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I expect nothing less than what we saw this year, extremely physical, competitive games, both teams throwing punches. Even in the first round where we played the Pelicans, it's not going to be easy. Teams are going to try to throw different things at you to knock you off your rhythm or figure out different ways that you're not as effective against them.

We just have to be ready to weather storms and figure things out. It's not like a team can come out of halftime and throw something at you that you haven't seen, have a game plan for. It's not like you can put the game on pause and go out and practice and then execute it. It's just be ready to expect the unexpected and figure it out as we go.

**Q. Mark said this is the lowest level that we'll see you just in your work in the off-season. Do you agree with that assessment?**

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, I expect nothing less from myself than to work extremely hard and become a better player. I don't plan to come back next year as a worse player or an equal player. I plan to come back better in many areas.

**Q. Bismack said that he didn't play in all 82 until his fifth year in and he said his body hurt. What do you say to that after playing 82 plus 10?**

CHET HOLMGREN: 15. Appreciate it.

(Laughter).

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Obviously there's a lot of bumps and bruises. You play through things here. You play through things there. I would say the biggest thing coming out of it is the fatigue, both mentally and physically. Physically just because -- it's not as bad in the playoffs. You have less travel, more time between games. But the fatigue in the season is -- especially like that January month back-to-backs. Traveling from one city to another on a back-to-back is almost impossible to recover in the way that you need to for the next game.

So sometimes you're just going out there, this is what I've got tonight; I'm just going to give it all. But it's not you as your highest level.

I wouldn't trade playing every game to sit out a couple so I didn't have to go through all that. It was all worth it.

**Q. Is it something you set out to before the season started that you wanted to play all 82, or is it just something that happened?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I guess you could say a little bit of both. Before the season even started, you can't say I want to play all 82. There are so many things that happen that you can't plan for. You could sprain your knee and literally not be able to play. Trying to focus too much on that, it wasn't something that I wanted to do.

I just wanted to focus on coming to play basketball every single day. It's what I love to do. It's what I do. If there's a really, really compelling reason for me not to, I'm not going to play.

**Q. You have a long way to go in your career. Are you able to put into perspective just how great of a season you've had?**

CHET HOLMGREN: Too early. I haven't even thought about it.

**Q. Chet, you said yesterday that nobody wins 15 straight games, so you know you're going to feel last night's feeling again. I think the optimism from a lot of people, people seeing and you guys seeing the potential window, how do you view that concept of a championship window?**

CHET HOLMGREN: In this league, nothing's guaranteed, and things change so fast that all we can really focus on is improving to the best of our abilities and being the best team that we can be coming into each year. That starts now for next year.

We can't worry about like what we might look like or what opportunity we might have in three years because there's so much that isn't guaranteed.

You know, they always post the graphics after each season, this is what the NBA looked like five years ago. There's like 15 All-Stars in different jerseys. It's like so much changes in the NBA. Your season could come down to one injury at the wrong time. You can't focus on a time span that wide. You've just got to focus on today, tomorrow, putting a plan in place for the off-season to get you in the right position for next season.

Then when the season starts, it's the same thing. Show up day 1 ready to work and put together a plan to put yourself in the best position towards the end of the regular season. That's what we're going to do. That's what we did this year, and that's what we're going to continue to do year in and year out.

**Q. Is there a moment from last season when you couldn't play that you look back on, maybe a conversation or an interaction with somebody, that you look back on today that has helped you throughout the season?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I definitely thought back to whenever something was challenging or I woke up really fatigued on a back-to-back kind of thing, just being grateful that a year ago I wasn't even afforded the opportunity. So now I have the opportunity, I've got to -- I owe it to myself and the people who helped me get back to being healthy and able to play, I owe it to myself and them to go out there and take full advantage of the opportunity.

**Q. I don't know if you're going to work out with any players or anything, but how much do you look forward to summer workouts with other players?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I love the off-season. I love working out. I love playing pickup. You want to play pickup against the best players that you can find, so whoever's willing to get in the gym and hoop, I'm going to be there.

**Q. There's some guys that say they don't want to work out with other NBA players because they don't want to show them what they have. There are some guys that love working out with them. What made you decide that you want to work out with other NBA players?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I would say I don't have the arrogance yet to be like I don't need to -- like if I'm playing, if I'm in the summer working out against somebody who has 15-plus All-Star appearances, et cetera, et cetera, I think I'm taking from them more than they're taking from

me. So I don't have the arrogance to be like I don't want them to be stealing my moves. Come on now.

I'm just looking for the best competition to go and play against.

**Q. Do you think you'll always be that way?**

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah. I feel like, even if it's the other way around, I'm just -- like the artist in me, like the way I look at basketball, I just want to push the game forward. If there's a young dude that wants to come in the gym and get working, I'm going to think back to myself now and be like I was in that same position.

As long as they're going about it the right way and treating the game with respect, like come work out. Let's do it.

**Q. You're coming off a series against the Mavericks against two of the more creative finishers in the league in Kyrie and Luka. How do you feel like you've gotten better as a rim protector going against guys like that?**

CHET HOLMGREN: It's tough because you don't want to let those two get close enough to the rim where you'd even have to protect the rim. You try to get the ball out of their hands and force other guys to beat you at the rim. So there's a delicate balance of that.

Great players make great plays. Kyrie got to the rim with a couple of crazy plays during the series, and Luka as well. You've got to respect the passing. It makes you hesitant sometimes.

It's just getting that experience and understanding how different guys play, how they make reads, what they like to do, it can only make me better for the next time around.

**Q. Do you think that's something that a lot of fans don't see of just like the difference between rim protection and rim deterrence of not even letting guys get shots up?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I'd say the people who only look at the box scores don't see that, but people who understand the game and watch the game see that. Like when somebody has a layup and they don't attempt it, that's not going on the stat sheet, but it's, I guess you could say, a winning play, having that to your advantage.

It's just as important in blocking a shot, keeping somebody from attempting a high-percentage shot too. Whether other people see it or not, I'm going to try to make the winning play, though.

**Q. Lu wanted to be, starting the year, an All-NBA defender, trying to get into those conversations. What do you think it would take for --**

CHET HOLMGREN: I don't know what more he could do, honestly. Extremely talented. Yeah, he deserves more votes, more recognition for that stuff. He shouldn't have to say it. Nobody should have to say it. It should just kind of be obvious.

He deserves it. I definitely feel like these playoffs have opened some eyes.

**Q. How would you describe Shai's leadership this season? Or even when you were not playing last season, what did you see in him?**

CHET HOLMGREN: He leads in a lot of different ways. He's not the most, I'd say, vocalizing leader. Like he leads with his words, both with encouragement and kind of trying to give knowledge. But I'd say the biggest way he leads is with example. A lot of times, he's the first one in here, the last one to leave.

He's always doing the right thing on and off the court, and on top of that he's a high-level talent. So it's hard not to try to follow suit with what he does. That's been a big part for us this season and a big reason why so many of us have been able to reach for improvement.

**Q. Do you plan or want to play with the select team this summer?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I haven't thought about that yet. I don't know. We'll see.

**Q. Shai said that he thought that this group could win a championship if you guys put the work in. Do you agree?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I mean, yeah. I always say, if you put the work in, anything's possible. So I agree.

**Q. Have you watched any of last night's film?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I've seen two of the clips. There were a couple clips that I rewatched during the game when I was on the bench, like telling our video guy, pull that up, let me see it one more time, so that I could kind of see from a bird's eye perspective, see the play and what mistake I might have made.

But I haven't watched it in its totality.

**Q. Have you seen the clip of the lob with 20 seconds?**



CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, I saw that.

**Q. Now, after you digested all of this, what do you make of that play, what it meant in the moment?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I think it was a great attack by Shai to get downhill and force the help and make the right read, and I was able to go and finish it. It was the right play, and we executed it well to give us a lead with 12 seconds left or whatever, which in any game you'll take. You always want a lead with 12 seconds left.

That doesn't guarantee a win, so credit to the Mavs. They were able to make a play on the other end.

**Q. I know the next play kind of will make it swept under the rug, but is that maybe the craziest play you've ever made?**

CHET HOLMGREN: I don't know honestly. I don't think it was like a crazy play. I feel like it was a pretty normal play, it was just at a significant time.

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