

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Wes Unseld Jr.

Media Conference



Spurs 131, Wizards 127

Q. Explain the finish and how they were able to come back there.

WES UNSELD JR.: They made some tough plays. We had a difficult time. I thought we missed a couple bunnies, a couple of good looks. It's frustrating, we're right there, up 12 with five to play. I thought that second group into the third to the middle of the fourth really played well. Had a lot of energy and pop. Trying to bleed some of our starting guys back in, and give the Spurs credit, they made plays on both sides of the ball, just enough to come away with it.

Q. The three-point attempt by Kuz there toward the end, what was the play? What were you looking for?

WES UNSELD JR.: I was thinking about going quick. We talked about it during the free throw. I'm not sure if it was articulated down the line, but I wanted to go quick. I had one more time-out just to try to extend the game. Now you get a bucket, take a foul, free throws, and then advance and see what happens.

Q. Can you evaluate your defense a little bit more generally, even though it happened at the end of the game it wasn't necessarily the Spurs' first run they went on where you guys would get up pretty big and let them back in. How do you feel like you did overall?

WES UNSELD JR.: Well, the biggest problem was the transition, and that was throughout, particularly in the first half. That just led to a volume of points in the paint. Not all of them were off turnovers, just missed shots or -- not the urgency, kind of running to our own matchups instead of just finding the nearest guy. To their credit, that's a strength of that team. We talked about it pregame. Third in pace, number one in three-point attempts and transition, and they did that tonight.

Q. Was it different watching Wembanyama in person than watching him on film?

WES UNSELD JR.: Oh, for sure. It's one thing to kind of get a sense for it, but you see it up close and personal, the kid has got a lot of talent. Still he's probably going to fill out a little bit, develop into his body. But very skilled, very poised, and obviously he showed he can score on all three levels.

Q. Bagley had his second plus-20-point, plus-10-rebound performance. What have you seen in his agility to be able to maintain that and be consistent with that?

WES UNSELD JR.: Yeah, I hope it stays consistent. He's done a really good job in two games with a limited package of plays. Just once again, plays to his strengths, doesn't try to do anything that's out of character, has really good feel for the game. Defensively, I think has a good feel for pick-and-roll coverage, active hands, making plays late around the rim. So just continue to expand as we grow with him. He'll get more comfortable with what we're trying to do, and I think that'll help him.

Q. How do you foresee him meshing once Gaff comes back from the concussion protocol?

WES UNSELD JR.: Yeah, I don't think it'll be a problem. I think it's good to have positional size, whether you start, come off the bench, but it's a good thing to have.

Q. On the Sochan free throws with 28 and a half seconds to go, did you consider challenging that foul call?

WES UNSELD JR.: Well, with just the one time-out, I was a little concerned about doing that.

Q. It felt like Bilal kind of got his footing going as the game wore on. He played a big role in that start to the fourth quarter. What did you like from him tonight?

WES UNSELD JR.: His aggression I think on both sides, just playing downhill. Found a little bit of rhythm in the pick-and-roll, and he just put his head down. I thought

probably should have gotten a couple of and-ones, a couple of free throws on those drives, but just playing with force, playing downhill was good for him.

once we put it together.

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Q. Corey had the great dunk and then a tech was called right after that. What was the explanation there?

WES UNSELD JR.: It's kind of one of the newer rules, that bench decorum, guys stepping on to the court. I didn't see it, who did it. I think it was probably a couple guys that just stepped across the threshold. Doesn't have to be much, but by the letter of the law, it's an infraction.

Q. After a game like this, as disappointing as it was, how do you keep your guys positive or their emotions up, particularly with a game in less than 24 hours?

WES UNSELD JR.: Yeah, it's probably frustrating probably until tomorrow morning, but we have another game to play, another game to plan for, another marquee matchup to kind of figure out.

You have to fail quickly, learn from it, and we'll watch the film and kind of extract some of the lessons, but you can't dwell on it because then you've got to turn around and perform tomorrow.

Q. Do you have in mind what it is you plan to teach about tonight? What feels teachable about tonight's loss?

WES UNSELD JR.: There's quite a few things. The film will tell the story, but just off the top, the second-chance points, the defensive rebounding needs to get better, the transition piece, which is a big piece of this, and we knew going in, the priority was the paint, minimizing the paint, and some of that of course was transition, some of it was one-on-one offensive rebounds, so it happens a number of ways. But those are things you can look at and then look at the stretch and see where we went wrong toward the end of the game, what we can fix when we find ourselves in those situations.

Q. Defense has been an issue all year long. Is it an effort issue, a personnel issue, and is it fixable at this point?

WES UNSELD JR.: I think it's fixable, and there are areas of improvement. Of course it's not where it wants to be, where we want it to be, where it needs to be, but that's something we're going to continue to hammer at. It's not going to change overnight, but I think incremental gains whenever we can find them, cleaning up certain areas, and I think those marginal wins throughout will be palatable

