

Washington Wizards Media Conference

Saturday, December 21, 2024

Washington, DC, USA

Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Bucks 112, Wizards 101

Q. At halftime, the energy was a topic of conversation, that you wanted to see it be picked up in that second half compared to the first half. Did you see it in spurts? Was it just not able to put it together for the full second half?

BRIAN KEEFE: Our defensive energy was definitely better in the second half. We still had some breakdowns in some certain plays and some key moments that are unfortunate, but our energy was better. Our defensive connectivity was better. We just didn't capitalize on it, apply as much as we should have on the offensive end, but credit to them, they came out and played a good game.

Q. Obviously they're down some stars, but then you have a player like Bobby who has that type of game. Is it one of those things where you try to slow him down but it just seems like he's on a heater and nothing can really be missed by him?

BRIAN KEEFE: He made some tough shots early. I didn't think we had the necessary physicality to make him miss, and then once he got going, we really never had much effect on him the rest of the game. That was probably a little bit not the necessary force at the beginning to make him feel uncomfortable. But credit to him, he made some tough shots, too.

Q. A low assist game for you, too, especially with the way you had been sharing the basketball as of late. Was there something off with that, or was it a part of that is shots also not falling?

BRIAN KEEFE: No, we got stuck a little bit playing on one side. We didn't have as much ball movement as we have been. Credit to their defense a little bit, but we didn't keep searching out better shots, and that affected us definitely in the second quarter when they went on their run, and that really turned the game right there. We've got to be more consistent with that for sure.

Q. What do you think went into, I think it was like 11 straight missed shots when they went on that second quarter run. What do you think went into that drought there?

BRIAN KEEFE: Just a little bit of lack of ball movement. Probably some of them we could have made, too. There were probably some makeable ones; that always is the case. But a little bit stagnant, probably not as much paint touch drive-and-kick that we've been playing with, playing not enough kick-aheads early actually because we were getting some stops a little bit. But we got a little too stagnant for sure. That hurt us tonight.

Q. Khris Middleton goes on that third quarter run by himself. How tough was that? You guys cut it to single digits, then he comes back --

BRIAN KEEFE: That was some of our -- we had been playing okay defense, but we had some miscommunications, not great talking, not executing the game plan, and with good players, you don't execute, they're going to make those shots.

Q. Bilal and Jordan, obviously good offensive game for them. What did you see with the way they were able to get things going for themselves?

BRIAN KEEFE: Jordan hit some tough shots that kept us going. Obviously he was very hot in the first quarter, and then Bilal, his activity actually picked up as the game went on, was able to attack, get out in transition, get on the rim.

We made a good fight there at the end that kind of cut it as much as we could. That's why I kept that group in there; I thought they had some good energy. But it wasn't enough.

Q. I know you talk about the work that gets put in behind the scenes, especially with a guy like Bilal playing on both ends of the floor, but seeing him now continuing to trend in that right direction, picking it up defensively but also offensively, how tough can that actually be on a consistent nightly basis when he's in a

weird way kind of making it look easy?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, it's a huge challenge to do those type of things. Credit to him and his physical stamina. There's also a mental stamina. I don't think people get enough credit for that. To be able to stay focused, locked in and then have the energy to do it on both ends, pretty impressive. He's growing with that. Not there yet for sure, but he's making strides, and that's what we want to see out of him.

Q. With Jordan the first quarter was obviously electric. Did something change how they were defending him afterward? What made him slow down?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think we got stagnant. Our ball movement got slow and we got slowed down, and they put their hands on us, and when you do that you're not going to get great shots. He hit some tough ones in the first for sure, but we were playing with a little bit more ball movement. I thought our ball movement got stagnant. That affected our overall offense in general.

Q. Is it frustrating you come off that Charlotte win and now you're playing a Milwaukee team without its top two players, to not be able to make it a little bit closer?

BRIAN KEEFE: We don't look at that like that. This is the NBA. There's guys out all the time. You come play who the guys are that are available. It was more just our own style of play. Give them credit, they played well, but we didn't play up to what we've been doing lately. For parts of the game we were, just weren't consistent with it.

Q. Obviously not the result, but defensively were able to get five blocks as a team. In games where the defense isn't perfect but you do have spurts where you show those glimpses, does that show you the things you're working on on a daily basis are beginning to start to build, it's just putting it together for multiple spurts, multiple minutes, eventually multiple games?

BRIAN KEEFE: We ended up having to play a decent defensive rating in the game; we just didn't have it in the first half. We made them miss in the second half. Our physicality, we were blocking shots, we were more active. They hurt us on the boards again, a little bit of hustle plays in that first half. We've got to clean up that stuff.

But we're starting to show some growth on our defensive end for sure. You can see it. But we've got to be more consistent. We've got to have that -- those are things that keep you in games when your offense sometimes sputters or isn't making shots. Your defense can carry. We've got to keep growing, but it has grown in the last couple weeks

for sure.

Q. There were a couple of times where Kyshawn picked up fouls and seemed pretty frustrated. What do you think the process is like for him to try and learn to defend without fouling?

BRIAN KEEFE: Just move on to the next play. That's it. That's what we always talk about; do the next right thing. That's what mental toughness is. He's fine. These are all things that happen in a game. People can show frustration quickly, but he shows the ability to move on to the next play quick, so I'm not worried about him at all.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports