

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Wizards 113, Hornets 110

Q. 21-point lead at one point dissipates and there was a four-minute stretch in the fourth quarter where you didn't score. What was clicking in the last few minutes that was not clicking leading up to that?

BRIAN KEEFE: Our defense. We won that game -- I think we were down six with six minutes to go. We got gritty defensively and that led to some transition, but we really stayed with the defense.

We got a big lead, they made a little adjustment, threw us off a little bit, but we stayed with our defense the whole game. That's what won us the game.

We ended up making obviously some offensive plays down the stretch. Some of those were hustle balls; the dive on the floor that led to the Alex tip-in. Really some gritty winning plays. Great stuff. You can win sometimes when you don't shoot the ball well. Great effort by our guys tonight.

Q. Take us through the Jordan game-winning three and also the Alex tip-in; take us through those if you don't mind.

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, the first one was just Bilal diving on the floor, hustle play, Malcolm gets one on the rim, Alex tips it, and then we get the one with Jordan, trying to get him in space, make a read. He felt like he had the shot. He took it. Great shot.

Q. Looked like Jordan was pretty banged up in a lot of pain for a while there. What does it say about him to go back in and make a shot like that?

BRIAN KEEFE: Huge toughness. This guy is a baller. Loves to play. Plays injured, plays hurt all time. You guys have no idea how much pain he can play through. It's impressive. He did it last year. Not surprised that he stayed in the game. He showed his toughness tonight, and he closed the game out. What a shot.

Q. How big was the edge you guys had in bench points?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, this is what we kind of envisioned as we go. We've got a deep team when we have everybody healthy. Keeps that scoreboard moving. Played the right way; that helped us get the lead, obviously, in the first half, and then that group even got us going a little bit there in the third quarter kind of when they went on their run.

But our guys stayed with it. Their defense, our defense traveled the whole game. We forced turnovers, got deflections. We got loose balls. I loved our effort tonight.

Q. They go up six; what did you see from your team as they continued to fight, especially on the defensive end? What were the specific things you were seeing?

BRIAN KEEFE: Great poise. Sometimes the games can change momentum. That can happen. But our guys regathered themselves and just kind of fought down the stretch.

To be honest, it wasn't always very pretty for either team probably, but that's the way high-level basketball games can go. It's who's going to grind out the games, who's going to drive on the floor, who's going to win the loose ball battles. We made some really key plays down the stretch. Really good.

Q. With the decision to move -- with Malcolm coming off the bench with JV, was that an intentional choice to pair them together and give that bench unit some infrastructure?

BRIAN KEEFE: Just looking at different combinations. We're still learning our group. We wanted to see what that looked like tonight. I think they have a good combination together. They know how to play well, two-man game, pick-and-roll, DHOs type of stuff. But we're still learning about our group.

Q. I noticed that a major theme of the game, especially in the earlier parts, were getting the rebounds. This is something that I've noticed more often in more recent games. What would you attribute more to the team's improvement in that aspect of the game?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think we've done a good job forcing people to take tough shots. I think the last few games we've struggled collecting the rebounds, and you've got to finish those possessions. That was a big focus tonight. They still probably got more than I would have liked. But I thought we battled, and then we got some -- Justin Champagnie comes in late, gets a key one. Great play. He hadn't played since we took him out start of the third, but he got a key rebound. Rebounding helps you, helps you win games, and that's what we did; we did the dirty work tonight. Great stuff.

Q. With the defense in particular, are there any specific plays that you saw or any particular moments?

BRIAN KEEFE: I just liked our overall activity. Hands on balls, deflections, flying around, multiple effort type things. I think that we forced them into some tough turnovers, some tough shots. They hit some tough shots tonight. Sometimes how the game is going to go, too, but we didn't waver. We just stayed with it, and I think that was a credit to our guys tonight. They just kept chugging away possession after possession.

Q. Was it a left hip injury for Jordan?

BRIAN KEEFE: Not sure which hip it was.

Q. Have you noticed Alex's rebounding getting better as of late?

BRIAN KEEFE: It had. I don't think it was too great tonight except for a very important one, so he got a very important rebound late, obviously that tip-in. But he's been controlling the paint. He's been active. You saw some of the blocks late, some of the vertical stuff that he can do. He's the linchpin of our defense. He's the anchor.

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