

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Jonas Valanciunas

Media Conference



Knicks 126, Wizards 106

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: We fought. Too bad not until the end.

Q. Obviously a scary moment for Bub but it seemed like he was in good spirits after the game. How good was that to see?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: Bub is tough, so -- I hope everything is going to be good, but he's tough, and he's going to tough it out. He's known for that.

Q. What was it like getting Kyle Kuzma back?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: We need everybody. You know, he's coming back, he missed quite a bit of time. It's going to take some time for him to get back in a rhythm. But very good to see him back. Very good to see him hooping and enjoying basketball again. Hopefully he's not going to go down again.

Q. Tough match-up tonight between Sarr and Karl-Anthony Towns. How important do you think it is for Sarr to go against bigger centers like that?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: That's a journey for him. He's just starting. Very talented kid and working hard. But we all go through that. He got to learn, and he's learning, getting experience by playing against guys like KAT or some other big names, good centers. Happy for him. He's getting better.

Q. What have you noticed about him in practices? You talk about being a hard worker. What have you noticed about him that's really contributed to this recent surge he's had?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: He works on his game. He's trying to add something to his game all the time. Also, for him, it's a lot of new stuff, a lot of new coverages, this and that. Just by being in practice and listening, he's learning a lot. That's a journey for him.

Q. What have the match-ups between you two in practice been like?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: No, I'm a third big.

Q. How has he picked up on some of the nuances of defensive post play, the low man, some of the things, the cross matches that you have to deal with at that position?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: You know, that's coming back to the details, learning. It's going to be easier for him with the experience to see all this, where he needs to be, where he needs to stand, how he needs to react to one or other situation.

Only experience can help that, and so far he's doing a great job.

Q. They talked about you mentoring him at the start of the season, and I just wonder, how does that manifest itself during the course of a season?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: Well, I'm just leading by example. Yeah, I'm talking to him, and if I see something, I correct. But he's a smart young gentleman. He knows what he needs to do. He follows the lead.

Q. What have you thought about the team's competitiveness over these past few weeks? You guys just played a good team pretty close for two straight games.

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: Well, we're putting the steps forward. We're putting the steps forward. Sounds just like a broken record, but that's a process. You've got to invest some time. You've got to invest some work into the process. Not going to happen overnight.

But right direction. We're putting steps in the right direction.

Q. As a veteran who's been in the league for a while and who knows the business of how all this goes, how do you approach as we get closer to the trade deadline? Do you pay attention to rumors? Do you stay away from it all? How do you approach that?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: I don't have social media. That's all.

Q. Do you get text alerts?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: Well, just Messenger. That's all. My friends can text me. And WhatsApp, a European thing.

Q. While we have you as a big man who rebounds well yourself, what do you think about Justin Champagnie's ability to rebound at his size?

JONAS VALANCIUNAS: Yeah, he's stealing big man's rebounds -- no, I'm joking. We're all rebounding. That was something that we didn't do a good job at the start of the season. We really put some time into during practices. We got to box out, we got to rebound, we got to do a better job just cleaning the boards. That got better, and Bub, Justin, they're coming in to crash and get those rebounds. That's what we need.

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