

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Washington, DC, USA

## Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Suns 130, Wizards 123

**Q. Game looked like it was out of reach there, down 24, cut the lead to three with just about a minute left. What enabled that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: We started defending, started playing with some physicality, started rebounding, and then we played with some pace. When you start with your defense, you can get your transition game going. We got some easy lay-ups and then we obviously made some threes there in the fourth. But our defense really turned on really even a little bit in the late third, start of the fourth.

**Q. That ATO with 45 seconds left, the Sarr three, was that the intended shot? Was the play designed for him?**

BRIAN KEEFE: No, that was probably the last option. There were multiple options on that play that we were looking for. They took away the first two, to be honest.

**Q. What did you see there in the final 90 seconds where Phoenix -- you cut the lead to three but then Phoenix pulled a little bit further away?**

BRIAN KEEFE: They made a three and then we were having to trap and foul and just hopefully get a steal. Missed a free throw, that type of stuff. But credit to those guys who played in the fourth. They did a tremendous job of getting us back in the game.

**Q. What's the lesson for your team, the lack of defense to start, or the ending?**

BRIAN KEEFE: It's probably a little bit of both. We didn't have the necessary force to start the game, and then we found it in the fourth. But in this league it's hard to play catch-up. You want to start the games like that, and that's an area we've got to get better at.

**Q. What did tonight show about Kyshawn George that you've seen so far?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I mean, to me Kyshawn has played the same way all year. You guys see when he makes the threes. I see all the other stuff. I see all the positive things he's doing. He made his shots tonight. But I liked how he was aggressive getting to the rim, the play making. But he made threes.

That's just part of the process of him improving is he's going to make those shots as he keeps getting better, but his game to me was the same as he always plays, and that's a connector and a passer, so credit to him.

**Q. What did they do to limit JP and Kuz?**

BRIAN KEEFE: We kept having to take the ball out of the net and having to play against a set defense for most of the minutes that they were in the game, so we weren't getting easy baskets. We got a few in the first half because we did turn them over in the first half a little bit, but we didn't get easy baskets, weren't getting into a good flow. That changed when we started upping our defense in the fourth.

**Q. The shooting numbers for them and the assists, they moved the ball well. Is there something you guys could have done differently to kind of disrupt that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought we did disrupt it. The turnovers ended up being pretty high for them, 16. But they're a good ball movement team. They've got two guys on the court that are drawing a ton of attention. That ball gets firing around.

We missed -- did some execution of our coverages weren't great in the first half. Our physicality wasn't what it should be. But when we had it right, we were flying around making them miss. You've got to make a lot of multiple efforts when you're playing a team that has that type of offensive caliber.

**Q. The starting lineup today put you guys in a pretty early hole and has been pretty ineffective for most of the season. What are you seeing from that first five**



**when they get out there?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I don't know if that's exactly true because I think we've had lineups that have actually started the game well.

**Q. This specific lineup I'm saying, JP, Bub --**

BRIAN KEEFE: This specific lineup? We just didn't have the necessary force to start the game. They were too comfortable. They were taking shots too easy. We've got to establish more force to start.

**Q. Do you anticipate changes to the starting lineup moving forward?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Haven't thought about it yet. We're just dealing with tonight's game. We're always evaluating everything all the time, but as of now, just thinking about our guys in the locker room, getting ready for this road trip right now.

**Q. What about the closing lineup that you had of George, Bilal, Kispert and Sarr and Butler. What did you see from them that made that run possible?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Like I said, this probably goes back to our defensive force, like that group -- JV was in with that group a little bit. JC was in there, Justin. Made a couple subs, bringing Alex and Bilal back, but it was the force, the defense, and then we were playing with tremendous pace, and that led to some easy baskets and good open threes.

**Q. With Jared, his minutes have dropped a little bit over the last three games. What do you need to see with him to give him consistent minutes as the season goes on?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Well, we have two point guards on the roster and he's kind of been like in that -- sometimes with Malcolm we have three, so he's kind of been in that mix of when guys are injured, or he's always had the readiness, opportunity to go.

I have great confidence in Jared. You can tell, I put him in at the start of the fourth. We needed a little change, a little spark with the lineup, and he always gives us that. I always have great faith in him. It's nothing he needs to do more; sometimes it's just we're trying different combinations. But he's always prepared and always produces. I always like that about Jared. Always ready.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports