

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Nets 115, Wizards 112

Q. You talked about wanting to see a response from your team after Thursday's game. Was this what you wanted?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, great competitive response. Guys were fighting. Our defense had been a little off in the second half and they got hot for some threes, but our competitiveness was there. Obviously was right down to the final second, so I loved it. It was great.

Q. What happened with the bounce pass from Colby? Was it just a little bit mistimed?

BRIAN KEEFE: He had a couple options on that play, attack himself if he had an option on the backside. They made a good defensive play.

Q. What went into the decision to stick with the A.J., Jalen, Colby, Tristan, J.T. lineup down the stretch?

BRIAN KEEFE: We talked about this with our group; we want to see guys in different situations. We want to see how they handle the pressure. These end-of-game situations are great learning experience. This was great. They had a ton of things that they learned, but the best thing was their resilience and toughness.

We were down six, seven late, cut it, went up, back and forth a little bit, but our toughness stayed throughout the whole game. I was really proud of those guys at the end.

Q. What did you make of the way A.J. led that late push?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, he got a lay-up, then he got that dunk, then he got the three. He had a nice little spurt there. He kinda figured out some of the coverages that they were switching a little bit. He got downhill and kind of opened up some stuff. But he's fearless. He's a fearless kid.

Q. What did you see from Colby Jones?

BRIAN KEEFE: He's a competitor. I think that's what we're learning about Colby. He's a competitor, a gamer. Comes up with loose balls, deflections, steals. Just makes winning plays. These are the things we want to learn. We're learning these things when we see them in these situations, so that was great.

Q. Coach, thoughts on the Taylor Jenkins firing, if any?

BRIAN KEEFE: Taylor is a great coach. This is a tough league. Good friend of mine. My thoughts are with him. But other than that, I'm not going to comment on someone else's situation.

Q. With A.J., 14 I believe of his 20 points came in the fourth quarter in very clutch moments. What does it say about a player that young that he's able to perform -- the crowd was very energized, as well, so maybe a little bit more pressure in that situation?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it's just great experience. I think it goes back to his fearlessness and his confidence in his ability. I told him to be aggressive. We put the ball in his hands, make the decisions, and he made great decisions down the stretch. I loved his aggressiveness. I thought it was really impressive.

Q. That one three that was hit by, I believe, Keon Johnson there late, I think Drew Timme hit two players with a screen there, how important was that play for the decision?

BRIAN KEEFE: I mean, there was multiple plays there at the end, and that was a big shot, but we got it back, we go up one, they got the lay-up. So it almost seemed like whoever was going to have the ball last -- but we just didn't make the last play at the end, but I thought we executed okay.

Q. For A.J. and Colby as guys who are going to have

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the ball a lot, what kinds of things do you want them taking away from late-game situations like this, especially for someone like Colby who struggled at the end there?

BRIAN KEEFE: I just think it was -- these are growing things. I was actually really impressed how they handled that. They got us the lead. They got us back in the game. It's not always going to go your way. You can learn from these things. But the fact that they get to be in these situations, really invaluable for them in their careers.

Q. Coach, Jordan Poole according to the Stat Nerds broke 1,000 three-pointers. Any celebration for that tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: I did not realize that, but I will congratulate him when I see him in a few minutes.

Q. Six turnovers, very low number. You had a lot of young guys playing in the rotation. How did you guys protect the ball so well?

BRIAN KEEFE: They ball pressure, too, so they're an aggressive defensive team. I thought we just continued to make the right play. We didn't shoot the three as well as we have been. That probably cost us a little bit in the game. But we kept making the right play. That's what we're trying to learn.

Q. Tristan with a couple blocks; what did you think of his rim protection, especially late in the game?

BRIAN KEEFE: Some good, some bad. Still an area of growth for him, when he can use his length. They got some ones quick on him late, but I think he's progressing. He's getting better at it.

Q. With that last five-man group, is putting them together, these guys played together with the Go-Go? What is the impetus to put those five players together because we've seen them get a lot of minutes together?

BRIAN KEEFE: It's time to see different lineups, different combinations and explore our roster. We don't get to see them -- some of these guys are new for us. We're learning Colby. We're learning A.J.

So we want to get them chances to get extended minutes, and a game like tonight was a great test because it was a close game and we can learn a lot from these games.

Q. How did A.J. Johnson handle playing all 24 minutes of the second half?

BRIAN KEEFE: I'm sure he's going to need a nap tomorrow.

Q. What does it do for your confidence in the team just to see them be this close late with a few injuries like Kyshawn and Middleton, et cetera?

BRIAN KEEFE: I just think it speaks volumes -- we had a tough game the other night, and we responded with that type of effort and that type of competitiveness. I thought that all the guys were supporting each other. I thought that was really important for us. We're disappointed we didn't get the win. That would have been great.

But it showed our character, and those are things you want to keep building on day after day.

Q. What kind of long-term impact, even though it ends with a loss, what kind of impact can a night like this have where you do have the kind of response that you want to see for the team building into the culture it wants to see?

BRIAN KEEFE: Like I said, we use every day to get better, so we're not wasting days here. How can we take advantage of our time? We've got eight now, I think. How can we get better at our next practice, our next shootaround. So we take everything very intentional because we're starting to build habits that are going to lead to consistent winning. That's our biggest thing. So how do you do that? You keep working. You keep growing. You keep challenging each other to hold to a standard.

Tonight we bounced back with a better effort defensively, physically doing some things. Now we've got another game Monday. Let's get better there.

Q. Marcus Smart, seven minutes. How does he respond to limited playing time in favor of development of some of the young players?

BRIAN KEEFE: Hey, they all want to play. They're all competitors. But the one thing you'll always notice with Marcus, he's the first guy talking to everybody in every time-out. He's talking to the guys, coverages, things he's seeing. So even though he wants to be on the court, he's still out there supporting his teammates, talking them through things, teaching them. It's invaluable to have a guy like him on the roster.

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