

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Washington, DC, USA

## Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



76ers 139, Wizards 134 (OT)

BRIAN KEEFE: For us, being in these types of games, learning in these types of situations, these are the things that we can put in the bank, that we can look at, we can get better at.

End-of-game situations are great, but the thing I really thought about this game was the way we played. We're starting to grow as a team. You can see us defensively disrupting things and then our ball movement, 33 assists today, just sharing it. Everybody was just moving the ball. It's really hard to guard.

They made a couple runs a couple times during the game, and we kept answering back, and then they made obviously a little bit of one late, but some great situational stuff that our team can take and we can put in the bank and we can learn from.

Never want to lose. That always hurts. Our guys are competitors. I'm a competitor. But there's things that we really took from this game that we can use to keep going forward and we can look at some of these situational things. We'll get better and better.

### **Q. What do you want your team to learn from those final two minutes of regulation and then the OT?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think one thing that's great, we're still a new group. We're learning what spots to put guys in. Alex, Kyshawn, we're learning. They haven't always been in these situations being the lead handler sometimes, who likes the ball where, when to go, and then obviously the defensive stuff is always the most important. They had a main scorer out there; I think Bona did a great job of changing the game when he came in. But there's execution on both sides of the game that we can look at and we can definitely get better at, but those things, you're going to be in these games as we grow, and I think they're great situations to learn from.

### **Q. I realize you have a young team, but why did your**

### **team lose that lead late?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it's a combination of things. I thought we got some decent shots. We didn't make some of them. I liked some of our looks. I actually thought we executed some of the things we wanted to get to. Sometimes you don't make them. Then I think we fouled little bit there at the end, just got them to the free-throw line. They got a couple key offensive rebounds; got to give them credit there at the end.

### **Q. What went behind the personnel decision late in the fourth quarter and in overtime to keep out the two vets plus Alex, Bub and Kyshawn?**

BRIAN KEEFE: That's our closing lineup. Those are our starters. Obviously two guys who are experienced around our younger players. Liked what they did. Thought they were playing well, wanted to go with that group. Didn't second-guess that at all.

### **Q. Alex was very aggressive offensively early, especially going up against a guy like Joel Embiid. What did you make of his aggression and play style against that caliber of a defender?**

BRIAN KEEFE: He's learning and growing. That's what the best part is, and he got it within the framework and the flow of the game, and that was the best part of how we played offensively. No one was forcing. The ball was just being shared. We hit the open man, like I said already, 33 assists. But you can tell we're hard to guard when we play that way.

The game gets tired in the fourth. It gets slower. We didn't score well down at some of our execution, but we're starting to see with Alex, like, him learning to play within the framework, and we played through him a lot.

It's not just the scoring. How many assists he had, five again tonight, that's the thing I'm always most impressed with him. It's his passing and his defense. The scoring is going to come, and obviously he had a big night scoring tonight.

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**Q. The last inbound that gets picked off by Philly, can you walk us through what that play is supposed to look like?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Trying to get the ball ahead. We think they're going to foul us in the backcourt if we bring it up pretty quickly so we're trying to get it ahead so we can get a quick look there. They made a good play, but I think they would have fouled us -- if we inbounded the ball close to our basket, they would have fouled us pretty quick.

Same play that Alex actually scored on the other night versus Charlotte, so it's something we've executed before that we knew we could go to without a time-out. They made a good play.

**Q. Going back to Alex's passing specifically, what is it about the way he allows the game to flow through him but you guys also play through him a lot within the framework? It doesn't seem like he's forcing it, but it seems like it's also coming through very authentically for him. What is it about him for such a young player that he's able to read what the defense is doing but also it's figuring out where guys want and need the ball?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think that's one of the things we saw very early even going back to why we selected him. I don't think people talk enough about his passing ability, his ability to see the game. We like to play through him. You can see how we play, like to play through him at the elbows and different things, and he can make the reads. He's got a different feel for the game, and we're going to continue to do more of that.

**Q. Balanced again with the scoring tonight. I think it was eight players in double figures for you all. When you have an offensive output like that and a balance like that, is a game like this with the result that you don't have more frustration than if it was similar to a Charlotte type of game?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Look, we're competitors here. Like that's what I love about our group and the locker room. No one is happy. Everyone wants to win here. But we put ourselves in position to win the game, and like I said, we can work on some of these situational things that all teams go through, and we're a new team. We've got new guys working together. We have some returnings, but we're adding some new pieces in there. The most important thing is how we played tonight. We played right. We shared it, passed it, and our defense is growing.

I was pleased, but we're also disappointed. We all want to

win.

**Q. What did you think about the way Kyshawn kind of stuck with it and found an offensive rhythm in the first half?**

BRIAN KEEFE: That's part of the deal. You're going to have games where you start off slow. I thought he played within the framework of the game. That's what everybody -- he didn't force it. He didn't score early. He let the game come to him. Then when it was his time to be aggressive and make plays, he did great things.

I think those are lessons that you learn as you go through this league. The games can change. They can -- I think that was one thing that I liked about our group tonight was our resiliency. They made a couple runs, but we pretty much answered, and that stuff, that's how you grow your group. We're growing. I like it.

**Q. After Bona's put-back with 27 seconds left, Kyshawn drives to the rim, puts up a lay-up, looked like there was some contact. What did you think of that play and did you think there should be a call?**

BRIAN KEEFE: No comment on that one. No comment on that one.

**Q. It seemed like down the stretch the fans were pretty split cheering for Sixers fans. What did you think about the atmosphere?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I generally don't hear the stuff that people say like that, but I love our fans. They're a committed group. I said that to you yesterday. They're terrific.

**Q. What's it like for you to see a young guy like Sarr play that well against someone on Joel Embiid's level?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Just shows he's growing. Just shows you his game is improving, the work he's put in. We're seeing these guys grow before our eyes in real time. But we're in Game 4, so let's keep working. We'll get back in the gym tomorrow. Got another game down in Oklahoma City, so let's keep pushing.

**Q. Down three with 10 seconds left in OT, CJ went for a lay-up. Is that the shot you want in that circumstance?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think it was 18 on the clock, right? It was a free throw? Yeah, we wanted to get it in quick. We had one time-out left. We wanted to get a quick two, and we could see we actually -- some of it worked. They missed a free throw, Kyshawn hit a three, so we actually



got to the situation we needed when we were down, so it was good execution there.

**Q. Kyshawn and Bub at times give you a point guard sort of like. What do you like about that combination?**

BRIAN KEEFE: We've got multiple handlers, and that's how we want to play. I think that's the hardest stuff to guard, when you have a lot of guys who can make decisions on the court, and I think that's what you saw tonight. It's like, we basically are playing bring it up, whoever has it off a rebound can push it, and then we're just moving it and sharing the ball. It's hard to guard when you have two big guards like that plus Alex who can play through. That stuff is pretty hard to guard.

**Q. Kyshawn and Alex are two of the most popular development stories popping through the fan base right now. What do you as a coaching staff, how are you keeping them to keep growing?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Nothing changes for us with that. The credit always goes to our players. I've got a great staff, great support staff with the medical and performance, too. It's about our players. How you become consistent in this league is what you do every day, how you prepare, how you train. So tomorrow, we don't change. We go back in the gym, we get back to work. That's what I love about our guys. That's their mentality. That's the standard that they're creating in our gym. That's our environment, and that's how we're going to improve.

**Q. The bench again seems to be quietly but loudly at the same time being quite consistent for you, nearly 50 points from that deep rotation. What have they been so steady at? It seems like you're getting consistent steadiness from your guys no matter who's going into the rotation.**

BRIAN KEEFE: Everybody contributed, and we're a deep team. I thought those guys gave us great minutes tonight. Everybody was sharing the ball, moving it. I thought it was really impressive. That's how we want to play. We want to use our depth. We believe in our depth. I think that's how we're going to be able to beat teams is wear people down, whether with constant pressure offensively and defensively, but our bench was terrific tonight.

**Q. What can you say about CJ McCollum's leadership of this team and despite him struggling a little bit tonight how he stays even keeled throughout the whole game?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think he was actually terrific. A, his leadership, he's a high-character person. That's first of all.

How he carries himself in his personal life, on the court, off the court, and then just his basketball, how he prepares, how he trains. He's obviously had a successful career. When you get to see these guys up close and personal as we're learning him, there's a reason why these guys are good. Him and Khris have had obviously great careers, and there's a reason why, because they're great examples for how you work and how you do things.

I thought he really set the tone for us early in the game with him getting into the paint and kicking out to our shooters. Very unselfish. He's been terrific.

**Q. You mentioned Kyshawn's offense earlier, but what did you think of him handling the two small guards for Philly?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, he takes the challenge. Look what you've seen from him so far this year? First game who does he guard? He guards Giannis, then he guards Anthony Davis, now we're putting him on two smalls. That's the versatility that we think we have on this roster. The fact that he can guard all those type of guys is pretty impressive.

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