

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Thunder 127, Wizards 108

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought we did some really positive stuff against a high-level team, obviously a championship-level team in a hostile environment. We played toe-to-toe with them for pretty much three quarters and were doing a lot of positive things we can learn from.

Great to have Bilal back, and you can see his physicality, his force, what he brings to the game, so that was terrific to see. Obviously they made a little bit of a run there, which they do. They can put their hands on you, cause some turnovers, but for the most part I was really pleased with a lot of things we did, a lot of stuff we can take into our next game and grow from.

Q. How did Bilal impact the defense tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: You could feel his physicality. Obviously you can see the shot-blocking stuff, but just his size, his length, his ability to cut people off. Pretty good for haven't played a game since over in Riga, so that's a pretty good outing for him.

Q. Can you explain to us your rationale as to why you structured the lineup the way you did?

BRIAN KEEFE: Like I said, it's really early in the year. We're trying different combinations to see what works. We wanted to see what that looked like tonight with Bilal in the lineup. He gives us that defensive presence, that size, and gives Bub an opportunity to run the second unit and really push the pace, which I thought the second unit was really good tonight. They gave us some really good stretches in both quarters, both halves, I mean, so I thought he did really good.

Things are fluid with our team. Things will change over the years, but we wanted to see what that looked like. We'll probably stay that way for a little bit.

Q. What did you think about Bilal's defense on Shai in particular?

BRIAN KEEFE: He's tough, as everybody knows. That's the reason they're a really good team. They've got a really good lead player. Try to make it tough on him, try to be physical on him. Guy hits some tough shots, you've got to pat him on the back when he does that. But just his overall impact on the game you could feel; it was nice to have him out there.

Q. 23 turnovers, their defense is obviously known for doing that. What did you see them doing that led to those miscues by you guys?

BRIAN KEEFE: They're a physical team. It's great lessons to learn. They put their hands on you. They're physical. They want you to play in crowds.

The positive part is when we were playing -- when we were making the simple passes getting it off, we were getting great shots, and that's what was keeping us in the game, so there's stuff that we can learn from that. Then they amped up the pressure, and that's when they went on a little bit of a run.

But when we were getting off that ball quick and really sharing it, we were getting some good stuff, and guys had a lot of good minutes out there tonight.

Q. It also seemed, at least in that back half of the third quarter into the fourth that a lot of the 50/50 opportunities were going their way. Did you feel like that was also happening in the flow of the game, or did you like what you were seeing from the guys as well?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think that was a little bit of a priority. There were a couple loose balls that we didn't get to they got to. Some of them were turnovers that ended up being loose balls. There were a couple of offensive rebounds, plays that they made. But for the most part, I liked what we were doing early in the game for that.

Stuff that we can look at, we can grow from, but some real positives there, too, that we can also focus on.



Q. From an offensive standpoint, a lot of what you were having success with in that first half was 10 toes in the paint and getting those quick swings that you mentioned. What were they able to do adjustment-wise that tried to prevent you guys from that in the second half at least?

BRIAN KEEFE: This is a good team. There's a reason they're good. They're a good defensive team. They've got good defenders. They put pressure on you. But that's what you're going to go through is you've got to play teams like this to be at an elite level, and we're learning what that looks like for us.

These are great lessons. I was actually really pleased with a lot of the things we did tonight. It was just a little bit of a stretch there in the third to start the fourth, but for the most part, I thought we played good basketball.

Q. There was a stretch there early in the fourth where you went with a grouping of Bub, Corey, Kyshawn, Khris, Cam, while they had Hartenstein on the court. Were you trying to make them adjust to you?

BRIAN KEEFE: They had gone on a little bit of a run, right, so we had tried to make a little bit of an adjustment to kind of free up and get more shooting on the court. That was all. Just trying to mix it up, give us some different looks, see if that was going to give us a little advantage.

Q. Correct me if I'm wrong; it seemed like at one point after a time-out you guys might have come out in what looked like a triangle-and-two or a box-and-one to try to put pressure on them but then you made a couple of subs and it seems like you guys went back to your man-to-man. Is that just throwing different defensive wrinkles to see how the guys read and react or how teams might make adjustments?

BRIAN KEEFE: I'm not going to comment on what we were doing because I might give some of the stuff away, but we definitely were changing coverages. I think you've got to do that when you're seeing great players, and that's part of executing and learning your game plans. I thought for the most part our guys were able to handle all the things that you guys -- you might not see all of it, but there was quite a few adjustments made defensively throughout the game.

Q. With Bilal, this is obviously our first look at him in year three. What has stood out to you the most? What looks most different from year two to year three so far?

BRIAN KEEFE: It's just one game. I'm just happy to have

him back in the lineup and seeing him have joy on the court. He's getting better. You can feel it. But one game back, just happy to have him there.

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