

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Magic 125, Wizards 94

BRIAN KEEFE: We're not immune to nights like this. No one in the league is. That's never the goal.

A couple things I thought hurt us. We got a little sticky with our ball movement, which we've been pretty good with this year, and we didn't protect the rim very well in the first half, which is something that -- we have given up rim attempts at a decent clip this year, but we've been protecting it at an elite level. We didn't really do either tonight, and that really hurt us.

It's all about our response coming up. We've got a two-game road trip coming up, and we can dig into those two ideas, how we can get better, and look forward to the challenge of getting after it in New York and Boston on the road trip.

Any questions?

Q. After the OKC game you talked about the lessons you can learn from that game and the positives that you took from that game. Do you feel the same way about this one with regards to the second half rim protection that you had?

BRIAN KEEFE: A little better. I saw, I think, to start the fourth, we showed a little bit. I think we were 13 and 7 to start that quarter when they called the time-out so we had a little bit more protection. You saw Alex get a couple shot blocks. We made a little bit of a push there, but too late in the game.

Q. You also did a pretty good job of limiting their offensive rebounding. I know when shots are falling, it's easy enough to not give up offensive rebounds, but that's one of those things that you talked about focusing on coming into the season. What did you see that allowed you guys to put a body on somebody, especially late in that second half?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think we can show we can be -- when

we're on, we can be a good rebounding team for sure. Those are the lessons that you can take away and move on to the next game. We're going to dig into the film. We have practice tomorrow, and then we're going to get ready for this next trip and get ready to respond.

Q. To your point about the ball movement, was it similar to OKC where the physicality and the hands they were putting on you limited the offense and got it a little stuck a few times or was it just not making that extra, extra pass?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think give them a little credit, too. They were able to -- they were switching a little bit, which can cause you to get stagnant in your offense. It's the thing that they do well. We weren't getting to our next action and making that a concerted effort to do that. When we've done that, we've been pretty good this year, but we just didn't find that spark there tonight.

Q. What was it like trying to reverse the momentum there in the second quarter?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, the one thing I like about our group is they stuck together. They were trying to find solutions. You've got to give them the credit, though; they put it on us a little bit. But our group was trying to find solutions in time-outs. They were staying connected to each other. I'm always impressed with our group when that happens.

You're going to have tough moments in a game and tough moments in the season; it's how you respond here going forward.

Q. How did it change the game how Kyshawn got into foul trouble early?

BRIAN KEEFE: I'm not sure it really changed it that much. He was scoring early, but our defense wasn't there early, so it was -- really our defense was not there, sharpness, protecting the rim, showing a crowd. When we did that in the second, a little bit the late third, start the fourth, our defense improved.

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Q. Where do you think Kyshawn is in his journey to play without fouling defensively?

BRIAN KEEFE: I'm not worried about Kyshawn. Not at all.

Q. What are you seeing from Bub offensively in all aspects of the game?

BRIAN KEEFE: It's good. It's a great opportunity. He's running the second unit, getting guys in position, getting in on offense pushes the pace and gets us organized check unit early in the year we're still seeing different lineups, different combinations. We did some different rotations tonight, all normal stuff. But there's going to be opportunities for guys to grow in their roles as the season goes.

Q. You talked about the rim protection. Obviously Alex was a huge part of that early in the year. Was something missing from his game on that tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it was our whole group. It wasn't Alex. He's the last part of our protection, but you have to do that as a group.

I thought we were too spread out on our shell. We weren't tight as we would have liked to have been tonight. Alex is always going to be the guy back there to clean it up, but we can't just count on him to be the whole defense.

Q. You talked about how every team games has games like this. How do you "games like this"?

BRIAN KEEFE: Games where you can't find your rhythm and you struggle in certain areas and then the game can shift quickly. We're just not immune to it.

We never want it to happen. That's not the goal of basketball. But it's about the response. That's what it's going to be about.

Q. With Bub, he drove down there multiple times tonight, sometimes got the dump-off to Bagley, but a lot of his finishes seemed to go awry. What did you see from that area of his game?

BRIAN KEEFE: I like that he's attacking. I like that he's aggressive. He's making dump-off passes. A thought a couple of his, to be honest with you, he got fouled on, some of those contests. But I want him to be in that paint. I want him to make plays. I think he's doing a good job of that this year.

Q. Going back to the comment you made about the lineups you did today, the young guys, Tre, Alex, Bub,

Kyshawn and Bilal, what did you think about that lineup? What did you see out there?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought they struggled a little bit in the first half. Just the rhythm of the game was off. But I thought they were really good to start the fourth quarter. You saw what that group was capable of. Again, we're still learning the group, trying different lineups to see who works with who, and I thought they were really good in the fourth quarter.

Q. What have you seen from Cam in his first season with the team so far?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought he was one of the guys that brought great energy tonight. He did a good job defensively on some of their guys, was attacking the rim. I was really pleased with him tonight.

Q. The paint differential in the first half, second half you only gave up 22 points compared to what you gave up in that first half. What shifted for you all in trying to limit and tighten up that shell defense as you mentioned?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think you just answered your own question. We were just tighter, showing crowds, making them shoot from the outside. We just didn't build a wall, build a crowd early in the game, and they were able to get easy baskets that built their confidence.

Q. As you continue to try and stack your days and stack habits and build those habits consistently, does that give you a positive outlook knowing that when you can make that adjustment, have that conversation, whether it's quarter break or halftime, they're hearing it and they're trying to implement it right away in real time?

BRIAN KEEFE: The one thing that's great about this group is this is a coachable group. This is a group that wants to get better. They take feedback great. They have feedback, too, during the games for each other. They knew that we saw some stuff at halftime that we could make an adjustment on. They did that.

But we've got to do that for longer, and that's what we're going to respond on the next game.

Q. With Kyshawn's foul trouble, what are the steps for him to try and balance and be aggressive in the way he plays on defense, getting steals and blocks but also trying to keep himself in games?

BRIAN KEEFE: I want him to be aggressive. I want him to



be physical. I think he went through some of that last year, but the refs are going to learn that about our team, that we're going to be physical and aggressive, and they'll make adjustments to how we play and how he plays as they get to know him. So I've got no issue with what Kyshawn is doing. I love his aggressiveness.

Q. Usually when do you see that adjustment by the referees happen? How long does it take for players to get that respect?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think he got it halfway through the year last year, to be honest. He figured it out, and they figured him out.

Q. Has he not figured it out so far this year --

BRIAN KEEFE: No, sometimes it's just the game. The game is going to give you different challenges. I think all these things are good. How do you learn to play with foul trouble, that's going to be part of it. You're going to have these things in big games, big playoff games. How do you deal with that? How do you play through that, because you're going to have those things.

Every player who's a great player in this league has gone through that. These are not -- no different for him. So how do you learn to play through foul trouble? How do you learn to be aggressive, pick your spots? I've been very impressed with how he's dealing with that, and he'll continue to grow there.

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