

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Knicks 119, Wizards 102

BRIAN KEEFE: Really liked our competitive response coming off the last game when we learned some lessons. I thought we really had the defensive intensity and focus to start the game really physical, causing disruptions, getting steals.

Obviously a tough little quarter, but we were playing against a battle-tested Eastern Conference Finals team. They turned us over, they made some shots from three, but then we had some good resiliency there I thought with that second unit, and I thought we did a good job in the fourth quarter.

Shout-out to those guys, Malaki and some of those guys who hadn't gotten much time came in, had a positive imprint on the game.

Stuff we can learn and grow from: Obviously the turnover battle was won by them, and that affected us. Everything else was pretty much even, but good learning process for us.

Q. Would you say the game took a wrong turn in that third quarter giving up the 41 points?

BRIAN KEEFE: For sure, yeah. They hit some shots, but I think we didn't have our hands on them as much as we would have liked, like we did earlier in that game, when we were forcing them into places that we wanted them to go. They had a little bit more force in terms of getting to the shots that they wanted, and then we got stuck in some crowds.

But I actually thought we made some really good passes and were finding guys in the corner. We just didn't make the shots. I think we continued to play the same way, and then we kind of made that run there late with that group when Corey's group was in the game with Bub and Tre and Cam and Marvin. Made a good run there to kind of stem the tide. Good resiliency there by that group.

Q. A little bit before the end of the first half you guys were up four and then they made those back-to-back threes. Can you take us through what happened?

BRIAN KEEFE: We executed the two-for-one really well. We got a three. They got a transition basket where we didn't get matched. We just had a communication issue. Then we maybe went a little early on the last shot.

But we just didn't match up super well in transition, and they got a three. Good lessons to learn from that, how you manage those situations. The first part was great, the second parts we didn't manage well.

Q. Khris didn't play tonight. What's your concern level with his left elbow injury and why did you go with Justin?

BRIAN KEEFE: Justin, we obviously, he's been with us for a while. We totally trust what he brings. Didn't want to affect the other parts of the rotation. Know what he can bring to our team in terms of his -- and he did, and you could see it. His defensive physicality, his ability to rebound, just kind of bring that presence to us. Khris is just a day-to-day thing.

Q. Going back to the third quarter, you got close to using all of your time-outs. How do you balance trying to get things back on track and have those conversations with the guys and get those solutions to the things you wanted to see versus trying to let them also play it out and have the conversations in real time without using all of the time-outs?

BRIAN KEEFE: Obviously we used some pretty quickly because they were on a little bit of a spurt. Give them credit; they made some shots too. But just getting back to what we were doing early: Establish our defense, share the ball, get the ball moving. When we do those things, we're pretty good.

Give the guys credit; they fought through a tough moment and they cut it and went on like an 8-2 run to finish, I think. Good stuff there to learn. We'll dig into the film tomorrow,



get ready for the next one.

Q. What's the message to the team after a game like this where you play well for large chunks but it's a 10-minute spurt that --

BRIAN KEEFE: Just get better. That's what you can control. We'll get back in the gym tomorrow. I think that's the great thing about our group. They're always focused on what we can learn and then take that information and bring it into the next game, and I think we're seeing that we're growing in certain ways. That's all you can do.

Q. Alex career high seven assists. Is that something that's gotten even better so far this season?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think our offense is growing and playing through him is growing. You can see that he can read the game well. When we play through him, he can see the passes and he's a very unselfish guy. He's not looking for his own shot. That's the reason we want the ball in his hands, and you can see what he's capable of.

I think he's just seeing the pictures. This is the maturation of all these younger guys. These things take time. These things don't happen overnight. I know everybody wants that in today's world. That's not the reality. You have to go through the fire. You have to learn. You have to see all these teams you're playing against. He's growing daily with that stuff.

Q. How helpful is it, outside of the assists, his ability to get it flowing from one action to the next?

BRIAN KEEFE: Like I said, we play through him, play through our bigs. There's a reason we do that, because of his ability to keep our offense flowing when we're playing well. That offense will just keep sharing and moving, and I thought we did that at times tonight, and when we did that, we were playing pretty well.

Q. A few days ago CJ made a really interesting point. As you're trying to build something successful, do you want to build it off the good habits and win or do you want to build it off bad habits and win. To your point of stacking those stretches and expanding them and expanding them, is that where it comes into play of as much as you want these guys to grow as players, you want them to grow in the right way, making the good habits so that when the winning is sustainable you have that mindset of when adversity hits, how do we respond and respond quickly?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, for sure. I think the one thing that people don't talk about is that every team has tough

moments within a game. New York had to call some time-outs tonight. That happens to every team. How do you respond? How do you move on to the next play? How do you just keep playing to the identity that you want to play for?

The teams who do that are the teams that end up winning. There's two teams out there, so you're battling against each other to establish that part of the game.

Resiliency is a big part of the game of basketball. How do you respond to things that don't go your way, shots not going in, maybe a call you think you should have got for whatever reason. Can you continue to do the right thing?

For the most part, our guys are doing those things. We had some good corner threes that we had early in the third quarter that didn't go in. Keep doing it. Keep trusting that process. We're getting there. We're growing with that stuff. But that's part of the deal. Every team has adversity in the game. It's just part of how it goes.

Q. Bilal had kind of a nice offensive game for himself tonight, especially just in his third game back. I know it's a very small sample size, but how have you seen his offense evolve off his defense and the strengths that he plays on that end of the floor?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think him and Alex, if I'm not mistaken, they're two of our better passers, too. He's an initiator/handler. This is really his third game. The other guys had some preseason games. He didn't have any. He's growing a little bit each game, getting more comfortable, just finding the rhythm. He didn't even practice with -- some of these guys he obviously played with last year, but he never played with CJ so there's some guys he hasn't -- Tre, Will Riley. It's just good to have him back on the court. He's doing great.

Q. He seemed pretty confident taking three-pointers, even some contested ones. Where have you seen improvement from him in that area?

BRIAN KEEFE: Like I said, I don't judge those things game to game. Those sample sizes are too small. He didn't make a three last game and he made three tonight.

Is he taking the right ones? Is he being aggressive? I think he got some corner ones tonight, which was great. We've got to get more corner threes. I think we had 10 tonight. When we do that, our offense is pretty good.

Shoot them when you're open, especially in the corners. If we play the right way, more guys will get open threes. We'll continue to grow with that.



Q. You guys obviously play at a very fast pace. It seemed to fluster the Knicks early on, the pace and the aggression. Was there a specific adjustment that they made coming out of the half or anything that you saw differently in terms of how they handled your style of play in the second half?

BRIAN KEEFE: I actually thought we got good shots coming out of the third quarter. Our defense just wasn't switched on like it was at the beginning of the game. They made an adjustment a little bit with their movement, their pace on offense and really in the half court. I think that was just the little difference right there. But we were doing -- we were running our offense pretty good. We were getting the shots we went. Sometimes they just don't go in. Can we just continue to trust that. But we're going to play with that pace because we think that's going to lead to us being a successful team. We're a pretty deep team. That's hard to handle when we're really moving the ball like that. You could see that at times. Just got to get more consistent with it, and that's what we're working on every day, trying to grow for our team.

Q. Bub took just two shots but had seven assists. What did you think about his balance between creating for himself and others?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought Bub passed the ball great. He was part of that key that helped us stabilize the game and make a little run. He was the one finding those guys in the corner. Corey was making good passes. I think that he played a good floor game tonight.

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