

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Mavericks 111, Wizards 105

BRIAN KEEFE: We were really pleased with the guys tonight, the competitive response that we were looking for. These are the games we want to be in, close games, tight games, a lot to learn from that. I made a little miscue there myself, so we can all grow on these situations, but the best part was three quarters, under 20 after the first quarter, under 30, so three quarters under 20 defensively. Our effort, our physicality, our defensive edge was there, and our competitiveness.

Got a little stagnant there in the fourth quarter, which can happen. Those are the learning and growing moments. But we're doing this as a group, and I was really pleased with our response from the last game.

Q. What did you think of the way Cam responded tonight, especially up and down with minutes, but it seemed like it didn't affect him the way he performed.

BRIAN KEEFE: We know how he is. We know he's going to come out and play well tonight. Like I said, guys get opportunities here, and that's the great thing about our team is that everybody is going to get a chance to look. He had a great night tonight. Was really pleased with his effort and how he played.

Q. What does it say about his mental fortitude to be able to stay ready and have that type of impact?

BRIAN KEEFE: That's the thing we've really liked about him is getting him into our program and how he's worked, how he's trained, how he's acclimated to our culture. He's been terrific. That shows you the work behind the scenes. That stuff pays off when you really get after it like that. Really positive effort by him tonight.

Q. The first half Dallas's defense did a pretty good job of keeping their shell intact to keep you out of the paint. That third quarter you guys made a huge adjustment. What did you like about the way you all

were able to then attack their shell, get in the paint but also still get the three looks that you wanted?

BRIAN KEEFE: We got off the ball a little quicker. We started playing a little bit in crowds there in the first half. Once we got off it and moved it and shared it, we were able to make secondary drives, get open looks in the three, get to the rim. When we do that, we're pretty hard to guard.

Q. When you started, you mentioned a miscue that you made. What are you referring to?

BRIAN KEEFE: Oh, at the end when the reset on the shot clock, Kyshawn there at the end fouling, we should have tailed off and just played out the nine seconds. I misjudged the clock. I told him to foul. That's on me.

Q. What did you make of CJ's defense, especially against Cooper Flagg?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought our overall team defense was great tonight. After the first quarter we were terrific. I thought we fouled a little bit there, but when we got our defense set and kept them out of transition, our defense was pretty good.

Q. I know three-point shooting hasn't been a strength of Dallas's, but a much better performance for you guys than last night. What was the difference for you on the perimeter?

BRIAN KEEFE: Just our scramble, our contesting, our flying around, our multiple efforts, that's the stuff I was really pleased with. If we continue to do these things, we're going to keep growing as a team.

Like I said, being in these situations is great for our guys. They're learning to grow in these things, how to manage leads, how to play down the stretch. All great stuff.

Q. You went with Malaki again. What have you noticed about him so far this year?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, he was ready to go. J.C. got in foul trouble, got four, so we needed an extra guy to come in. Again, it's just another example of guys who are ready. He's doing a great job behind the scenes, keeping himself in shape, and his game is sharp, and I thought he had really positive minutes tonight. Good for him.

Q. You alluded to this before. What did you see from your team's offense there in the fourth quarter, and why did it get stagnant?

BRIAN KEEFE: They were switching. They were switching everything. They went small. Sometimes you can get stagnant in there a little bit. We tried to play a little bit of one-on-one. But these are the lessons. The game in the fourth quarter for both teams can usually slow down; can you execute your stuff, can you run your actions that you want. Being in those situations is great for us. What can we learn from those, how can we grow. Now we can look at the film. Those are the things that are really positive. Getting into those situations are going to carry off big time down the road.

Q. How do you want your team to attack a switching defense in that situation next time you encounter it?

BRIAN KEEFE: We've got multiple things. Obviously I'm not going to give away too much of that. But usually when you're in situations like that, you want ball and player movement. You can get stagnant because that's why teams switch. I felt like we actually were able to get in the paint. We maybe could have kicked out a few more. But give them credit.

Q. You mentioned that in this game that you were pretty pleased with the fact that they gave physicality and were aggressive. What would be the next step in terms of the mission that you guys are having this season for the next game coming up?

BRIAN KEEFE: Keep building on that. Keep this the consistent thing to how we play. Keep making this something we can do for longer and for better. That's the goal for us. Those are the important things. That was a good step tonight.

Q. I know Bub has been struggling the last couple games except tonight. He's trying to show that he's getting in a little bit of his groove. What's something you've been telling him to try to feel comfortable in his role? I know it's a little different than last year.

BRIAN KEEFE: I think he's been growing the way he should. We've asked him to become a better defender. He's been defending terrific. Now he's playing with a

different unit and those are all things that take some time. He actually made some key plays down the stretch of our game, hit Alex on the roll, different kick-outs, spray-outs for shooters. But this is part of the maturation process for him, being in these pressure situations, learning how to run the team when he's the main handler out there. All good stuff. I like where Bub is going.

Q. Tactical question for you. The success you guys had in the second half with the middle pick-and-roll, what was the key to it? Especially it seemed like Alex really activated himself. What was the key to that middle pick-and-roll specifically?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought they were putting two on the ball, and Alex can play in that pocket and roll. He can either finish or he can pass, as we know. He can just put a lot of pressure, and we were delivering it. We were just getting off it quicker. I feel like we tried to force that a little bit in the first half. We showed good growth, finding the right decision, getting off it quicker allows us to either get easy shots to the rim or kick-out threes.

Q. Did Dallas do anything to take away CJ offensively in the second half after he had 21 points in the first half?

BRIAN KEEFE: Some of the switching. He got off it, too, a little bit, and allowed us to get other guys going, too. When you have good players like that, it's not just about him scoring, it's about the team scoring. He can generate gravity for everybody else if they put -- like I talked about, he was one of the guys they were putting two on the ball and getting other guys shots. That's just the normal flow of the game.

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