

Washington Wizards Media Conference

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Washington, DC, USA

Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Wizards 132, Hawks 113

Q. After 14 losses in a row, what does it mean to have a win like tonight where you lead wire to wire?

BRIAN KEEFE: Just that we're getting better. I thought we were trending up on our trip, the way we were passing, moving, sharing the ball. I think that was an example of stuff that we stuck with and we have gotten better at.

Obviously we made shots tonight, but the ball was flying around and we were pushing the pace, playing the style we want to play, the identity we want to play to, which is start with defense, get out in transition and really share it. I thought we did that tonight. Terrific.

Q. How important is it to have nights like tonight where everything clicks together to kind of have everyone see, this could work, this is how this can work?

BRIAN KEEFE: You always want to win your competitors. That's the biggest thing. We act like that's not something that's a big deal. We want to win. Our guys are disappointed when they don't.

But it just shows you what we're capable of and how we've got to continue to stack it. As coaches we're always kind of moving on to the next thing, but I'm really pleased for the guys in the locker room because they put in a tremendous amount of time.

But that's how we want to play. We want to play with defense first, rebound, and then you saw the transition, and then obviously we made shots tonight, but the process was right. The shots were right. Really good stuff.

Q. CJ obviously had an insane game. He hit a lot of shots. What did you see from him in total if you're looking at it wholistically offensively from CJ that put him in the position to hit those shots?

BRIAN KEEFE: I liked how efficient he was. He ended up taking 25 shots but he made 17 of them, was 10 for 13 from three. I think he was one away from the record, two away from his career high, which he had in this building last year versus us.

He's been doing this for a very long time. Not surprising with who he is, and if you guys ever get to spend time with him, this is a guy who is totally dedicated to his craft. He's been doing this for a very long time. We're obviously lucky to have him here part of our organization.

But he got it within the flow of how he played, and that's the most important thing. It wasn't like forced shots. He took a couple. He checked ones which he should have. But it was in how we play, within our movement, within our system, and guys were finding him, and that shows where the team is growing most importantly.

Q. What did you see from Alex, because he went up against a guy bigger than him in Porzingis and put up a very good stat line and was really showing his two-way versatility?

BRIAN KEEFE: Alex is growing. We've seen it all year. Obviously he has made a big jump at this early start of the season.

But he makes such a big imprint for us on both ends. Obviously I always start with his rim protection and what he does for us on the defensive end, and then the offensive skill set is growing. The ability to roll, the ability to shoot threes, the ability to make tough shots, little turnarounds in the post. These are all things he's getting better and better at, but it's always to me the most important part to start with with Alex is his impact on us defensively.

Q. You talk about a lot of the little things that you guys want to do. You turned them over 19 times. You guys also had the fast break advantage, nearly 30 points for you in transition. How much did your activity on the defensive end fuel not just the transition offense but your offense in totality?

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think one guy that the stat sheet doesn't maybe jump at you is Bilal really had a huge imprint on this game tonight, picking up their best player, pressuring him, trying to make things difficult for him, in passing lanes, getting disruptions. I thought he set the tone for our defense to start the game and his ability to push in transition. Those things were huge for us tonight, and that's what he's capable of doing when he's on like that, and he was on tonight defensively. Terrific effort by him.

Q. I know wins and losses mean one thing, but this is the first win this season at home. As well, too, the first Cup win in franchise history. What led to everything kind of culminating tonight, especially against a very good offensive team in Atlanta?

BRIAN KEEFE: I always go back to -- as a coach, you go back to the things that we're doing to stack the habits. Not everybody might see it, but I see us growing in the last three games. I think we talked about that at the pregame. Our passing numbers are up. Our assist numbers are up. We had a good defensive game in Chicago. We had a really great defensive second half in Minnesota.

We're starting to see the pictures both offensively and defensively more. I think that resulted in us being who we were tonight.

You've got to give Khristian a lot of credit, too. What did he have, 12 assists? He was controlling the game. We obviously are very lucky to have two guys like that on our team, CJ having a big night, but the way Khristian controlled the game with his passing, playing through him on the offense a little bit. He's so unselfish, always makes the right read. I thought he was terrific tonight.

Q. You talked about wanting to force more turnovers. What allowed you guys to break through?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it was Bilal setting the tone. I think it was everybody being engaged. I thought our physicality was good, our communication was high. I think that's what we're capable of.

We're not there yet. That's just something we've got to keep working on and growing on and keep being consistent, but that was an example of how we want to play for sure.

Q. How is Corey doing?

BRIAN KEEFE: I don't know much yet. Thumb. We'll know more here. Just found out about it myself after the game. Obviously he was pulled during the middle of the

third quarter. Don't have anything more than that right now.

Q. You talked about Middleton's 12 assists, but in terms of two-man action with him and Sarr and the high screen-and-roll, can you talk about how effective that was throughout the whole game?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, that's one of the things that's been -- from the day he got in our gym and with us, him and Alex have a great connection. You could see that instantaneously when he got here. That's the thing I've learned about Khristian. Khristian has been doing this a long time. I probably didn't realize how good a passer he is, the way he sees the game. Obviously he's been doing this at a high level for many, many years, but he sees the game in an easy way, and him and Alex have a great two-man combination on that pick-and-roll.

Q. It seemed like Coulibaly has a nice outing every game. Can you talk about his growth on the offense? Obviously he's a big-time defender but also balancing that with his growth on offense?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, obviously you see some of the explosiveness. I thought early in the game he was the one that got downhill and got into the paint that led to some of the spray-outs. He's still getting used to playing with that starting lineup. He's only four or five games with that group. But we're starting to see him be able to initiate, play with pace, because he can cause havoc with his speed. I thought we saw that really early in the game, and that's how we got a lot of our threes early was that penetration.

Q. I know at different times you've said let's try to make them call the first time-out, especially if a run happens. You guys forced them into calling I think it was the first three time-outs of the ballgame. What type of -- if you do take any pride in forcing the hand of the opposing coach the way you did tonight, especially with the fact you guys have been dealing with a losing streak as long as you have?

BRIAN KEEFE: The most important thing to me is are we growing and playing the right way. We want to make this something sustainable. That's what I was most proud of. That maybe led to the time-outs, but we were playing the way we want to play, which is - I'm going to have to say it - defense first for us. That led to us -- I think we had I don't know how many transition baskets. It was a pretty high number. We were getting out in transition early in the game, pushing that pace. That started with our defense and then our passing. We played the right way tonight, and that led to the win. That's what we continue to focus on. We want to get better. It's not just about tonight.



Tonight we're happy for the guys because the guys deserve it and we've got high-character guys in the locker room and I'm pleased for them, but we've got to keep improving and keep getting better, and that was an example of how we can play.

Q. You talked about wanting this for the guys. Being with them after the game, did you detect any relief among them or is it just business as usual for them?

BRIAN KEEFE: No, guys were happy with the win for sure. You should be happy when you win a game. It's hard to win a game in this league. I don't think people realize how hard this league is. It's unforgiving. I was pleased for them and they were pleased. But the one thing I know about them, win or lose, they come back and they're always in the gym the next morning ready to work. That's the thing I'm most proud of with this group that I get to coach.

Q. You talked about Alex's impact on both ends. What's something that doesn't show up in the box score that really stood out to you tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: He deters people from coming into there. He's a big presence out there. So obviously you see the shot blocks, but it's the little fakes that he might make or him just coming over early, like I'm going to have to kick this ball out.

I thought our scrambling was really good tonight, like multiple efforts, guys flying around. I thought that was really impressive. That's part of defense.

Alex is going to come over, who's going to have his back, who's going to scramble and rotate. I thought we were pretty high level to start the game with that.

Q. What was the message to the team after tonight's win?

BRIAN KEEFE: Let's get back to work tomorrow. Happy for you guys. We did things the right way. Have a nice Thanksgiving. Have some gratitude.

Q. Cam played just under 10 minutes. Was there a reason for his limited minutes?

BRIAN KEEFE: No reason, no, just going with different guys tonight, seeing different looks, flow of the game.

Obviously Corey got out so that kind of changed our substitution patterns a little bit. Malaki came in and helped us out, which was great. He was ready to go. He's been great this year. He's always ready to go. It was just one of

those nights.

Q. (Indiscernible) running and really getting to his spots. How much did you see them really running tension away tonight to create opportunities?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think that started in the Chicago game, a little bit of the second half in Minnesota. We were getting out early. Corey gives us a great energy with that. Having him in the lineup, he really runs, and then our guys are unselfish. We do a good job of kicking the ball ahead and looking for guys early in transition. As we all know, when that ball is thrown, that's going to make you run faster.

But I think our guys were intentional about that, and that's how we want to play. I think we're showing glimpses of how we can go, and that was really impressive tonight with that.

Q. CJ was awesome tonight, obviously, but when you see Alex do what he did, you see Bub coming in and playing well, when you see Bilal defensively, is that what these young guys are capable of when everything is -- there's a ceiling there?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, they're establishing themselves in the NBA. It's a hard thing to do. They're growing before our guys, and they've got good guys to follow with some good veteran leadership with Corey and CJ and Khristian and Anthony Gill and those type of guys. But they're learning how to do things the right way.

All their baskets and how they played tonight were all part of winning, and I think that's what the most important thing is is that they're learning to play within a system structurally both offensively and defensively that's going to be something that's going to help them long-term. But they produced in a game that was really important for us to win. So really happy for them.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports