

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Hawks 131, Wizards 116

BRIAN KEEFE: I'll start it off. I thought it was a great response from our group tonight. Obviously we were shorthanded with numbers, but I loved how everybody stepped up in their role and did their job and contributed to this game tonight.

I thought it was a terrific run to get that game in the third quarter going into the fourth to get the game tied. Give them some credit at the end, they made some threes in transition that kind of pushed it a little bit out, but I was really pleased with our guys, with the response from last game. I thought it was a good team effort, group effort, and we had a lot of guys step up.

Q. What was it about that third quarter because I know especially as of late, at least this season, third quarters have been essentially your nemesis. It seemed like tonight you guys had the right moxie that was necessary in that third quarter. What changed?

BRIAN KEEFE: Got to give a lot of credit to the guys who came off the bench. That was Jamir, Will, Tristan. That group found a lot of energy. We were getting stops. We were rebounding the ball better. I thought our ball movement was terrific. It was one of our better ball movements, especially with that lineup. That's the way we want to play, and that really set the tone to get us back in the game.

Q. Turnovers were a conversation coming into this one. What shifted in the second half with regards to not having as many turnovers as you did in that first half?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think we realized they were putting two on CJ, two on Kyshawn, two on the ball, and we were just getting off it quicker, our spacing was better, and then we were willing to get off it. Sometimes you're trying to beat that double, but we were just getting it swing, swing to the corners and then able to break that down. I forgot to

mention Malaki. I thought he created great minutes in that stretch, too.

When you get off it quick and move it quickly before the defense can get there, it makes you hard to guard.

Q. Tristan was questionable coming into this one with the knee. It seemed like he was just trying to push through it but gave you guys a lot of energy. What did you like about what he was able to bring as part of that second unit?

BRIAN KEEFE: Obviously you can see his skill set in terms of his ability to pass, his ability to roll. I thought he gave us some good activity there on the defensive end. I thought he did much better on the boards in the second half, which we challenged him, and I thought he picked it up. But Tristan has been good in the minutes, and he's continuing to improve.

Q. What are the developmental areas you're looking for Tristan to improve going forward?

BRIAN KEEFE: Number one for any 5 man in this league is the importance of being able to defend. You're always going to be the anchor for the court. I think he's showing actually a lot of improvement this year. He's one of our leaders in the league, team leaders in disruptions. He gets his hands on a lot of balls. But they're involved in so many plays as a 5 man in terms of pick-and-roll or being the help side. So that stuff he's going to keep working on. The stuff he's actually getting better at, we've been pleased internally with his progress, but that's going to be a year-long project for him.

Q. I know you have to look at the film to have a more detailed answer, however, how did you feel Bub played tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought he was really good. I think he had eight assists, one turnover, controlled the flow of the game. One of the things Bub does really well is pushes the pace, helps us get organized.



Obviously I thought when we were struggling a little bit offensively, he made a couple of shots that kind of staved off a run, so I think he felt the timing of the game and was aggressive when he needed to be. But he helped us get organized, and I thought he was pretty tough defensively tonight. He was pretty physical.

Q. You talked about the rebounding. The one in the third quarter was the one you were able to fight back, what did you see there and what did you see that was different?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought we just challenged the guys at halftime. We obviously are smaller tonight, but that ball is in the air, can you go get it, and I thought our guys responded in the third. We limited them to one shot. We were actually turning them over, and that's what enabled us to get back into the game. That was the big thing in the first half was the amount of second shots they had. They're obviously a pretty good offensive rebounding team. They crash on their threes.

But I loved our disposition, and we all challenged each other, and I thought they came out with an aggressive mindset to go get that ball in the third.

Q. Cam Whitmore did not play tonight; he was questionable due to illness. Did that factor into the decision?

BRIAN KEEFE: We've got a deep wing roster on our team. We all know that. Right now we want to see, and J.C. is the one who's playing really well. We wanted to see more minutes from him, but we also wanted to see an opportunity for Jamir, Will and Malaki, and I thought all those guys contributed really well tonight to the game. That was the most important thing.

Cam was not in the lineup tonight. We have certain standards that we have for our team. He has to live up to those better, and he'll have a chance here, but that's going to be up to him when that time comes, and he has to meet the standards and expectations that we have for him as a team. That was the reason he wasn't in the game tonight.

Q. What are the standards that you're not seeing with him?

BRIAN KEEFE: That's the stuff we talk about internally, so it's more the stuff we saw in the game, but I don't have anything to comment on that.

Q. What did you see from Bub today that maybe he did better in the game that he didn't do as well in, and how can he build on those in the future?

BRIAN KEEFE: Bub has been with us for over a year and some change now. He's still an emerging player. I loved what he brought tonight. When we were down, I think he played 21 minutes in the first half. Got a little bit of sub there in the second half. But he brought great moxie, great physicality, great defensive pressure, and then the ability to control the game he did, finding the spots, getting our guys organized. Obviously the assists stand out. But I loved the pace and the physicality he played with on defense tonight. Really good.

Q. How do you think Will changed the dynamic of this lineup?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, he's obviously a growing player. You can see the things that he can do really well. His ability to crash, get on the boards, his ability to make plays in the paint and for himself and for his teammates. Obviously he was in that unit that was really moving the ball and sharing the ball well. We've been really pleased with his progress.

Q. I know it's still early, but if Bub can continue to hit threes at the rate he's done so far, what can that do to transform his ability to contribute on the offensive end?

BRIAN KEEFE: That's something he's always been really able to do for us. Obviously when you're coming into the NBA there's a learning curve a little bit shooting from that line, but he ended up shooting the ball pretty well for us. He has the ability to do two things. He can shoot off the catch but he can also shoot off the dribble. That's a pretty unique skill set for someone that young.

Strengths for Bub is he can play with the ball controlling the offense but he can also play off it, and we want as many of those guys as possible who can defend.

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