

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Washington, DC, USA

## Coach Brian Keefe

### Media Conference



Wizards 116, Grizzlies 112

**Q. Fourth win in seven games, as well first back-to-back wins of the season. What was it that shifted specifically end of the third, into the fourth, after they made that extended run?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think the thing that was great tonight is, and we talked about this pregame, we obviously shot the ball really well last game. We didn't shoot the ball great tonight. But we stayed with it, and we weathered some storms and some runs that they made, obviously, and groups found their ways to be resilient and fight through that and get us back in the game.

But our defense carried. I think we had 33 what we would call disruptions, deflections, steals, blocks. We were very active tonight, and that carried us throughout the whole game. Teams are going to go on runs. We didn't hit our shots, and we got a little sticky at times with the ball and that caused some turnovers, but our defense stayed consistent, and that ran the day for us. So that was great. Got to win sometimes in different ways.

**Q. What also shifted defensively with Santi because you guys pretty much shut him down in that second half and made it very difficult for him to score. I think he only had three points in that second half.**

BRIAN KEEFE: He got out transition a little bit, I thought, in the first half, got some easy baskets. When we played in the half court, our defense was really good. Some of our turnovers led to some of those runs that got them out in transition, but our half-court defense was really solid tonight.

**Q. Speaking of that defense, Alex had six blocks, career high for him. Can you speak to what you saw from his rim protection tonight and how it helped the effort on defense?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think he's had three, four and six in his

last three games. That's why he's here. That's why we picked him, to anchor our defense.

He was really active tonight, and he set the tone for us defensively, protecting the rim, multiple efforts. That's what he's here for, and he's growing and getting better with that. It was a terrific effort by him tonight.

**Q. He didn't see much time on the floor there in the second half, I think, until about six or seven minutes remaining in the fourth. Was that a restriction thing, or was there another personnel decision you were making with that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: A little bit -- this was a fast-paced game. This game was pretty fast-paced. We wanted to keep guys fresh for the end, and I think that helped us at the end.

**Q. With Alex and the way he's played so far this season, do you think there's some buzz for him to be an All-Star?**

BRIAN KEEFE: You know, I think he's putting up those type of numbers, personally. Where he ranks for centers in the Eastern Conference in terms of points, assists, blocks, he's doing it up there with the top level of everybody. He would rank probably in the top 3 in all those categories, which is pretty high level for a guy in his second year.

He's continuing to get better, and I know he just wants to keep pushing himself. That's what we're going to do with him every day, and we're seeing the growth on both ends of the floor, and he really impacted the game with his defense and that was huge winning plays for him tonight, so yes, I do; I think he's on track for that.

**Q. Tre with another solid game, and he had a team-best plus 18. What has impressed you about his recent stretch of play but especially tonight?**

BRIAN KEEFE: You can see that he knows how to get in spots and read the game to get his shot, either coming off pin-downs or off-ball screening or pick-and-rolls. He has a knack for scoring and getting in the paint and making



plays.

I thought he was really good in the first half with that. I liked him with that starting unit. I liked what I saw. He's growing. I don't know how many games he's been back right now, but each game he's a little bit better, a little bit more rhythm, and I thought he had a terrific game tonight.

**Q. Eight guys with 10 or more points tonight. Is that the ideal kind of game you want to see from the offense?**

BRIAN KEEFE: We've got a deep roster. Malaki came in and gave us great minutes tonight. Hadn't been in the rotation a lot, got some extended minutes there in the second half. We want to share the ball, move the ball. We don't want one guy to get 35 for us; that's not how we're built. So when we can stack up double figures like that, that's a great way to play, and that's not even with a great shooting night. Yeah, that's a great thing for us.

**Q. What's the biggest overall difference you've seen in the team from the past seven games versus the beginning of the season?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Just doing stuff more consistently. I think we had some good stretches early in the year, but they weren't as consistent as we're doing it now, and we're answering things when things aren't going well, being more resilient. I think that's a great quality to have in this league because, as I've said before, this league is tough. There's good players. Things are going to happen in the game. But we're answering the bell, and tonight was a great example of that. Again, I think they went on like a 19-0 run, and we answered the bell.

Fourth quarter the same guys were in. I didn't sub anybody out, trusted those guys. Those guys got us back in the game. They cut it to four at the end of the third and they got us the lead, and then we brought in the veteran guys down the stretch. Obviously Khris made some big plays down the stretch as he does. He's been doing that for a long time. But good solid effort by everyone tonight.

**Q. How pleased were you with the free-throw shooting, close game, you guys go for 24 of 25?**

BRIAN KEEFE: We needed all of them tonight, right? Yeah, it was great.

**Q. Justin Champagnie, his impact, four rebounds tonight, what you can say about him?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Elite. Great coaching, as I said, right? Great coaching by us. He's great at it. He's got a unique

skill. There he is right there. We're not taking credit for it; you get it done yourself, young fella.

**Q. Back to Alex, one of the things that y'all want to have him do is put more pressure on them offensively. How is he coming along with that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, you can see his distribution of shots is much changed, right? Way more at the paint, way more at the rim. I think he's getting fouled on some of those. He's attacking. Obviously he got some threes tonight, but it's a good balance to him this year. We want him to be aggressive. He's putting pressure out there, and he's a load when he puts his head down and gets to that basket.

It's been a point of emphasis for him that he wanted to do and us too, and he's shown great growth with it this year.

**Q. Defensively with him, one of the things, especially for young bigs, is it's hard to defend without fouling. He seems like he's getting better at that. How do you see it in terms of where his hands are, and more importantly, what work he's doing before the ball goes in the paint?**

BRIAN KEEFE: This is why this stuff is great. He goes through a year last year where he has to line up against all the great centers and all the great guys, and we put him on everybody last year, and there's a learning curve to that. Now you're seeing, he's seeing this is Jackson for the third time now, and knowing when he can be physical and when he can get his hands off of -- still learning, still growing, but he's understanding when he can be physical and when he can use his length at the rim. That's a hard thing to learn, but you've got to go through the fire, and he's been through the fire, and he's getting better because of it.

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