

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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## Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Wizards 120, Magic 112

**Q. That fourth quarter, extended run going back to the third, 25-8 run by them, what did it take from a mental standpoint from you all because it was one of those times where you have a scoring drought, but the defense continued to just grind it out.**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think that's the thing, that's the point of the whole game is that sometimes you're going to have runs like that. That stuff happens. You don't want it to. But our defense carried out. You can see the impact Bilal had on the game. I think he had five steals but he was just all over the place, and obviously Alex coming back and just swallowing up the rim, protecting it, the shot blocking.

But we were forcing turnovers, and that really got our game going. Had just a little tough stretch there, but then we finished off playing defense again. We're learning we can hang our hat on that. That's really good.

**Q. You mentioned Alex's shot blocking. He had, specifically in that clutch time, those two back to back. One seemed like it was just a grazing tip, but then he had that big one on Bitadze which ended up in the jump ball. Just his ability to quickly react the way he does, how has he grown in that area?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think he's just seeing a process of things even quicker. We want him to keep attacking. I think he has room to grow, too, which is amazing to say, what he's doing out there already for a guy his age.

But it just anchors our whole thing. We've got great confidence in him that if there's a breakdown that he's going to be there, and he just keeps being there over and over again. It's impressive for a guy like him, and he's going to keep pushing, but it's something there. It's really cool. Really cool to see.

**Q. It wasn't just that you guys forced turnovers. Obviously that's been a point of emphasis. You also**

**capitalized on them, 29 points off turnovers. How were you guys able to do that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Once we were able to get that stuff, we were able to kick it ahead, get out in transition, make the simple play. We're converting in transition pretty well here lately, I believe in the top half of the league in that, and that's how we want to play, starting with our defense and getting into offense quickly, and if we can get stuff in transition, that's even better.

**Q. We see it time and again from CJ, but when the lead gets down to two, the alley-oop to Alex, scores and a triple and then another jumper. What is it about him that can get you over that hump?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, him and Khris are amazing at this, that they can just settle us down offensively, get us into a spot we're comfortable with, make the right read. Obviously he just can make really difficult shots, but he made the right plays. Obviously he closed it out for us offensively making the right reads. Hit the big three, hit the two, and then you talked about the lob.

Just settles us down, gives us confidence out there on the court.

**Q. Do you think Bilal's shot diet is finally in a place where he can be most effective?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think so. We want him initiating and handling it a lot into our offense, and then he's obviously finding the corners, but it's the attacking, like the free throws are up. That's where we want him, downhill, attacking, in transition, putting pressure on the rim. I think this last stretch of 10 or so games, his free throws are pretty high, and that's where we want him. He can be so aggressive. It's a game changer for us because we aren't a high free throw team. I think we had 33 tonight. But he can just put pressure on that rim. I really like how he's attacking.

**Q. I believe the two late jump balls for Alex that were mentioned, have you noticed him getting stronger or at**

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**least displaying that strength a little more this season?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, did they give credit for blocks on that? That's a good question. I don't know the answer to that because that would have been like seven if they didn't count those. Those were game-changing plays, too. Just protecting the rim, getting his hands up. Yes, he is obviously stronger. You can see that in all facets of his game. Obviously he's protecting the rim, his defense, but also his offensive ability to protect the basket, too, so that strength is showing up everywhere.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Tre today, five assists, career high. What has it been for him growing as a play maker throughout the course of the season?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought he was terrific tonight. I thought this was one of his better games. What he's seeing is how much gravity he has. I said this to him after the game: People are putting two on him every time he comes off a pick-and-roll or screen away action, and he was the one who got our ball movement started early. He was just firing, hitting the rollers, hitting the corners. That was really impressive for a young guy, just taking what the game gives him, because he obviously has the ability to score, but he was making the right play over and over again. I thought it was really impressive. Great growth by him.

**Q. What do you think the young guys can learn from this type of game where they almost give up a big lead but they actually pulled it out in the end?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think they need to realize that these games are long, and you just want to keep doing the things that got you the lead. Sometimes you forget how you got there. I think we realized it late, we got there with our defense. We gave up, I think, a big scoring number in that stretch, and I think we just relaxed a little bit defensively.

But the reason we got the lead -- people don't talk about that enough, and we talked about that right before about the seven-minute target, how did we get there. We got there with our defense, and we finished with our defense, so I think there was great growth tonight.

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