

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Coach Brian Keefe Media Conference



Wizards 109, Bucks 99

Q. How important was the bench contribution today given Tre leaving the game in the second quarter?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, thought they were terrific. We played smaller today. We played Jamir and Justin at the 4 and 5; thought Malaki gave us good minutes in there.

Really positive what they did. They kept this game steady for us. It was really good.

Q. Initial update on Tre's status?

BRIAN KEEFE: I do not have one, no.

Q. We know that Alex was under the weather. How big was it for him to not only play but have the performance that he did?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, terrific tonight. Obviously wasn't feeling good but he'll step up to the plate. I believe career high rebounding. He was out there switching on pick and rolls tonight, protecting the rim. That's really the story of today's game. Obviously we didn't shoot the ball the way we would've liked, but we're winning with our defense.

We're able to get stops, able to keep them off the free throw line. Take those things that make us consistent, and we got stops down the stretch, too. I think that was really the story of the game. When you're not shooting well, you can still win the game, and we've done that here a little bit lately. Those are really good things, really positive steps for our team.

Q. Mentioned doing that lately. It's been kind of a recent trend. What can you say about the guys kind of buying into that identity?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think it's good. I think our defense is growing from basically the last month or so, but then even the last week it's really stepped up. You can see

we're just disrupting teams, harassing teams, making plays at to the rim, hustle plays.

That's stuff that's really winning basketball. We're making a ton of winning plays out there, and that's good momentum for our team. It's good growth.

Q. Speaking of defense, Coach, can you speak to Bilal's defense tonight. Late stop on Kuzma, but the whole game.

BRIAN KEEFE: He sets the tone at the point of attack. I also think he had ten rebounds tonight. He just causes havoc out there. It's hard to bring the ball up for him. It's extending where their offense is starting and kind of gets everybody engaged, because they see him and you have to respond to that. Your teammates see his intensity level.

Him and Alex -- him out front and Alex on the back line, that's pretty hard to score on us right now.

Q. Chase asked you about Alex. I think officially career-high on rebounds. Giannis was out, but he also had to go especially against Myles Turner. What did you see from that matchup and what enabled him to do that?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it was multiple efforts because we were switching pick and rolls, so it wasn't exactly like he was underneath the rim the whole game. So he was going to have to come back, and then obviously you saw him on the offensive boards, too. I believe he had seven offensive rebounds.

That was a big key for us. We had 23 offensive rebounds -- 23 second chance points, I'm sorry.

But we were attacking the glass, and those things help you win the possession game. I believe we won the possession game by a pretty good number tonight.

Q. Can you talk about your team's resilience and executing to close this one out?



BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think we been in those -- I think we talked about this probably about a week ago. We been in a lot of these close games here recently and they're all good lessons for our group. We're learning what we can do to execute on both ends.

Most important thing is being able to execute and get stops. Been able to do that. We were able to find some good execution, things that we want to run offensively that led to some good shots. Saw the back door to Khris for Kyshawn. Bub made a big -- got those two big free throws.

Kyshawn had a little pull up jump shot he had in the lane. Like all these things are just teaching us how to play in those close games. Those are great experiences for our group.

Q. You just mentioned Kyshawn. What did you think about his aggressiveness at the end, attacking his matchups, getting to the basket, mid-range, whatever it may be?

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, we want to put him in as many of those positions as possible. He's going to be in those a lot in his career. It's early in his career. He's learning those, where he can get to.

He's big and can see over the defense. He can make the pull-up, which is really good, at the end of the games, and he can also make the passes.

So all those things are really good. Keep putting him in those situations, and we will continue to do that.

Q. Seemed like your team had an extra skip in its step after this. We could hear some of the yelling from the locker room area after the game. Positive yelling, not an angry yelling. What had the group so unusually hyped up after the game tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: I'm not quite sure. I'm probably too old to understand even half the stuff they do in there. I think they were happy with the win, grinding out that way and able to get that. I think they were just happy about that.

Q. They say any of that 6-7 stuff or they too old for that?

BRIAN KEEFE: I don't even know that stuff. You're on top though, Josh, that's impressive.

Q. Before the game, Chris D had it asked you about Bilal being aggressive. I know from an offensive standpoint that the score sheet doesn't have the numbers, but how do you feel he was based on your

response to her about getting downhill, attacking his matchup, and then do you feel he flipped it and used that aggression on the defensive end?

BRIAN KEEFE: Defense is always constant with him. That never changes. I thought he was aggressive when he had the opportunities to attack. Saw that he got that one in transition there in the second half.

He's just kind of sets the tone for us on both ends with his aggressiveness. But defense was terrific today.

Q. Hey, Coach, outside of Sarr, wasn't really a whole lot of size in tonight's rotation. Is there anyone you're sort of trying to get to play bigger, considering how skinny some of the guys on your team are?

BRIAN KEEFE: (Laughter.) We did play smaller tonight. Like I said, we had Jamir and Justin playing the 4 and 5 and we were switching a lot of pick and rolls. So everybody had to do their part. You could see we made plays at the rim on some of their bigs that were pretty impressive. The guys scrambling over, digging out balls, blocking shots at the rhythm, getting on loose balls. All these to are just winning plays. Doesn't matter the size you were. We really fought in there tonight. Really good.

Q. And of your 12 wins this season, three are against the Bucks. Have you seen any patterns these three wins, something you're taking advantage of?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think I said this in the pre-game, we just take it game by game, every game is a separate thing. Really don't have much more on that.

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