

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Khris Middleton

Media Conference



Knicks 132, Wizards 101

Q. Khris, your coach said, and he's probably right, that this doesn't really speak to the growth of the team over the last four weeks, three weeks. What do you chalk this game up to, this performance up to?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Just a bad night. I think we've been playing well as of late, trying to make the right plays. Effort has been there. Tonight just wasn't all the way around.

Q. What needs to change from the start? This is, I think, the second time out of three games where something similar to this has happened.

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Yeah, just got to figure it out. We've got to do a better job of starting the game out the right way, whether it's figuring out how to get ourselves going as far as pushing it on the break more, figuring out a way to get more stops early. Whatever it is, we have to get off to better starts.

Q. BK mentioned the force and physicality he thought was lacking in the game. As you went from the first half to the second half, did it feel like that force you've been playing with as of late was picking up as the game went on, and how do you get that to go from the start of the game as you mentioned?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: I think we tried, but I think it was probably a little bit too late by the time we tried. But credit to New York; they're a physical team, a big team, and I think we've struggled with that most of the year, just with bigger veteran teams that play a little bit more physical.

Just got to be a little bit more aggressive. Accept it that they're going to be physical with us and play through it.

Q. You've been around different groups with your time in the league. How have you seen these guys utilize, take advantage of the opportunity of having these minutes available to them, whether you've physically

been in the lineup with them or not? How have you seen them grow? I'm thinking Jamar, Will, AJ, Sharife, even AG getting some really high minutes as of late.

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Yeah, I think it's just not taking things for granted, taking advantage of your opportunity, knowing that this is a great opportunity for them to have extended minutes where they can get into a rhythm and really showcase what type of player they can be in this league and what they can continue to do as far as what they're improving on. But I've seen a lot of growth since the start of the year. They're hungry. They want it. They want to be great. They want to be better. They still have a long way to go, but I love the attitude. They come here ready to learn, ready to work, ready to attack the day.

Q. Branching off of that, Will Riley had 18 on Sunday, which was a career high for him, and he had 17 tonight. Since the first game, where have you seen his game grow the most?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Just his confidence. He's a quiet kid that really wasn't saying much on and off the court. But now you see him talking a lot more. You see his energy as far as attacking. You can see he's still trying to figure out where he can get his buckets at because he's about to get it for sure. But it's great that he's increased his confidence because confidence is huge in this league, and for a guy like Will with his skill set, he can be great.

Q. Having won everything in this league yourself, how can players who are young on a team like this build winning habits in their career?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Just not taking days for granted. Knowing that, like I said before, we all have a rare opportunity, where not too many games are judged off wins and losses but how you perform, how you compete. So just taking advantage of those things.

Q. I know lately the last couple games we've seen a lot of the G-League guys come up and try to earn that opportunity. What can you say or what are your thoughts on the young guys and some of the 10-day



guys on trying to earn their opportunity, especially in games like this?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: As far as --

Q. Especially in games like this coming off tough losses?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: What am I seeing from them? Just their effort, them trying to make the right play, them trying to get in front of the coaches, coaching staff, front office, whatever it is. They realize they're on two-ways or 10-days or whatever the case may be, and their opportunity is shorter than others, so they come in with high energy trying to do what the coaches say, trying to be coachable, being great teammates, and I think those guys are doing a great job.

Q. What's your approach as a veteran leader? The reason I ask is Donte DiVincenzo just went viral for saying you were an extremely impactful veteran for him because you held him to a really high standard. I understand you do the same thing with the Wizards' young guys. What is your approach as a veteran leader?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Yeah, first off, just being a professional. Not really talking the talk but walking the walk. Coaching those guys, trying to give them confidence, trying to help them out to become better players, but being on top of them, holding myself to a higher standard. I've learned that through other veterans and other teammates that I've had in the past. We all hold each other accountable, and great things can happen as a group.

Q. This isn't your first trade deadline, but how do you approach the next 48 hours, which is historically not a settled time for anyone in the league?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Yeah, just focusing on what you can control. A lot of uncertain things can happen around this time, but the more you're thinking about it, the more you're on Twitter searching and scrolling, the more you're going to drive yourself crazy.

I tend to trust my agent, that he's got his ears to the streets and he's going to let me know if something happens, but for the most part I'm just going to focus on my daily job, and that's coming in every day, trying to help this team be better.

Q. You mentioned the leadership aspect. I'm curious how you've seen yourself grow since the trade last year. It's one thing to have one or two young guys on

the team, but essentially you have 10 extra children, if you will, and that can be a tough situation for anyone. How do you think you've grown, or have you seen yourself grow as a leader in dealing with a locker room that does have as many young guys as this one does?

KHRIS MIDDLETON: Yeah, I think I've just probably got better at having a little more patience. I think that's the word, patience, just as far as style of play. Playing with a couple more experienced guys on the court, learning that I need to have patience, that these guys are trying to figure it out and they're trying to do it the right way, so trying not to be frustrated and impatient with them when they may not see things the way I see it or that other experienced players may see it, just being patient on that they're trying to make the right plays out there and keep on encouraging them.

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