

Washington Wizards Media Conference

Friday, February 20, 2026
Washington, DC, USA

Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Wizards 131, Pacers 118

Q. Another night where your bench comes up huge for you. I believe nearly 70 plus points from them. What is it that they continue to rise to the occasion the way that they have been?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it was the whole group tonight. I think you guys asked me before the game, what's the key going in. If we can repeat what we did yesterday. We turned them over. Obviously we gave up too many points in the first half, but I thought our defense really ramped up there in the second, and we started converting those in transition, and I thought that was the key.

Then our ball movement, 36 assists, 78 in the paint, two games in a row, really high paint points, which we want them to do. But I thought our defense really ramped up there. It was really good.

Q. What was it that you guys were able to be so active in the paint the way that you were, especially being undersized compared to the size that they had?

BRIAN KEEFE: Especially that last unit there that was in the game, just disrupting the game, active hands, getting steals, not letting people run their offense comfortably. I thought we really started the third doing that, and that allowed us to get in transition. Then I thought we were just downhill attacking, not settling for stuff. We didn't shoot a great three-point percentage tonight, but we were aggressive to the paint, and that was really good.

Q. You mentioned that third quarter. What shifted for you all in that third quarter because you came out and went on two quick runs and were able to take the lead and kind of figure it out and steady the ship from there?

BRIAN KEEFE: Defense. Yeah, our defense picked up. Our activity, our connectivity really was there in the second half. Really impressive.

Q. Of course you mentioned the Wizards having 78 points in the paint, and that being a major factor in today's win. I also wanted to add back-to-back double-digit wins including tonight, which involved a 20-point swing, a double-digit comeback and a double-digit victory. What do you think played the biggest role in not only the team doing that in back-to-back nights but maintaining the stamina and consistency to do that, given the fact the Pacers showed no quit neither night?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think it shows the depth of our roster, too. We talked about that. We knew we were going to play a little bit more minutes coming out of a back-to-back. We're in three of four right now, and we wanted to get more guys out there in the rotation knowing we were going to play shorter bursts, and you saw the depth. Our bench played terrific tonight, and those guys played at a high level, but it just shows you the high quality of players we have on our roster. I was really happy with the guys tonight.

Q. What was that conversation at halftime? You guys definitely came out defensively more aggressive in the second half.

BRIAN KEEFE: Just get back to our standard of play, what we're capable of. I think we just talked about that. I liked what we were doing offensively. We were making the right plays. We just had to pick up our defense, and I thought the guys obviously did that in the second half.

Q. You guys were shorthanded without having Tristan and Justin Champagnie at the end of that game. Was there something that you said to them or do you have any updates on their conditions?

BRIAN KEEFE: No updates yet. Both of them had to go back to get some things checked out. Tristan was his arm and Justin was his knee. But I have nothing further than that.

Q. Anthony Gill, back-to-back games where he has



showed up. He had a dunk today, bench pretty much cleared. What do you have to say about him and his play these two nights in a row?

BRIAN KEEFE: He kind of always answered what the jobs needed to be done. I think I talked about this pregame. If it's 30 seconds, he's ready. If it's 25, 30 minutes, which is needed on what we had tonight, he can do it. That just shows you the professionalism he has to keep himself in shape. Obviously he wasn't in the rotation for a long time. But to be able to do that and keep yourself going is a testament to him.

Q. One of the stated benefits of all of last season was the total number of minutes for Bub, Alex, Kyshawn, for their development. Given that Will Riley is only 20 years old and is a rookie, to what degree are you stunting his development by only playing him 20 minutes tonight, four minutes last night?

BRIAN KEEFE: I don't feel like we're stunting him at all. He's been in the rotation. I talked about we were going to use a lot of our guys in the rotation tonight because of the second night of back-to-back, coming out of the break, and then having an early game on Sunday.

He's been part of our rotation. He's obviously a big part of our future. But obviously wanted to get a look at some of these other guys tonight. So not stunting him at all.

Q. You always talk about competing. The past two nights they've done that very well, but they also look like they're having a ton of fun. We've seen a ridiculous amount of dunks. I know you as a coach are going to always see room for improvement, but when you see them playing freely like that, how does that make you feel?

BRIAN KEEFE: It's great to see the joy with our guys, and that's fun for me to see. Teammates celebrating each other, too, that's a big part, too. So everybody is supportive of each other who was in the game. Guys were on the bench helping, supporting, cheering them on. That's just part of the stuff that we want to build here, and we've been doing that stuff all year, so it's just a continuation, but it's always nice as a coach to see that for sure.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports