

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Brian Keefe Media Conference



Jazz - 122, Wizards - 112

Q. Brian, I understand the result of the game, but I would be remiss if I did not ask about the performance of Juju in just his third NBA game.

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think he set -- was it a record for rebounds for a rookie? He was all over the place, terrific. That's why he was here. We were short on bigs. Our scouting department did find him. We've had him in our system before because of the draft stuff.

I thought he was like a one man gang out there rebounding. He was terrific. Credit to him.

Q. Is it common or uncommon for a rookie to be thrown into the fire the way you have with him and be able to play the level of minutes and hold the stamina that he has? I think he's averaging right around 30, 31 minutes.

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, that just shows you we were correct with the professionalism, the type of people we identified and what we want in our building. He's showing that, and that's a credit to him.

Q. With the game, where do you feel that things kind of got away from you guys?

BRIAN KEEFE: We had a hard time controlling the dribble tonight. I thought that was the biggest thing, dribble penetration, getting to the basket. I thought we scored okay. It was just the penetration, Collier and some of those guys getting downhill. We didn't protect off the initial drive, and then our shell wasn't tight.

Q. Will Hardy said before the game that Trae is one of the only guys where we really do have to pick him up really far from the basket. How does having him out there just change the defense from your perspective?

BRIAN KEEFE: We've got two "Traes" now. Which one?

Q. Trae Young.

BRIAN KEEFE: We've got to figure out how to handle these two.

You saw the type of passes he made tonight. We know the shot making ability. To me it was the stuff that he was finding guys and how he made the game easy for others. Bilal making threes. Tre Johnson making threes. His ability to get in the paint. His ability to draw fouls.

Great first step. Like I said, this is early in the process, but I was happy for him to get back on the court. He's only played 10 games this year. It was fun to see him out there.

Q. First part of the game, he seemingly walked right through the paint and scored at the rim. How big is it to have someone in the backcourt who can space the floor while also just getting to the rim like that?

BRIAN KEEFE: I talked about it before. You have to guard him all over the court. If he's off the ball, people have a tendency to drift towards his direction. I saw that tonight, opening up driving lanes for others. We're happy to have him for sure.

Q. You mentioned the threes that he created. How about specifically in transition with some of the kick ahead passes?

BRIAN KEEFE: That's, one of the things we talked about. He said initially, you can see the few times he's had it the last couple days in practice was he looks to kick it ahead. It's a great skill. People want to run when they see that, and people want to get out because they know that you're going to get the ball, and you could see that tonight for sure.

Q. The Tre-Trae connection, what did you think of it tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: Pretty good.

Q. I'll ask you a more basic question. How did Trae Young look tonight for you?

BRIAN KEEFE: I thought he looked pretty good for a guy who hasn't played in a long time. I thought he was moving well. I thought he was pretty quick, changing directions, doing the stuff that drove me crazy running defense for a bunch of years. I thought he was pretty good.

Q. I know you have much more important things on your mind. Do you notice a special kind of energy and a special buzz in the crowd tonight because of his debut?

BRIAN KEEFE: Usually I'm pretty locked into the game, as you guys know me well, but I did feel that presence today. You felt the electricity in the building. Our fans have been terrific this year. I'm glad they came out to show support to him, but he could definitely feel that.

Q. Brian, the beginning of the third quarter, Trae went out of the game for two minutes after he fell. What happened there?

BRIAN KEEFE: He got hit right in the face, first of all. I'm surprised that wasn't called a flagrant. We do it with all of our guys. He got hit right in the eye. He has to shoot that free throw because he wouldn't have been able to come back into the game. We had him shoot the free throw, check him quick, he was clear, right back in the game. We always put our players' health and safety first.

Q. Either the first or second quarter, I don't remember when it was, but you mentioned the kick ahead passes with Chase. You called a timeout for one of those.

BRIAN KEEFE: He caught me too quick. He threw that too quick. That ball went out of his hands right when I was calling it. I was like, oh, man, but that stuff happens.

Q. Looking forward to when you finally get the full team healthy, how well do you think Juju's rebounding can contribute alongside Alex Sarr and Anthony Davis?

BRIAN KEEFE: You guys have heard me say I just focus a day at a time. I don't look out too far in the future. You can feel his presence out there. That's why he's here. We were down numbers and downsize. We needed a body that can come in and do the things he's doing, and he's been terrific.

Q. With Trae Young, obviously we know what he can do on the court, but just as a leader, as a veteran on the court now and he's playing, what difference do you

think that made for the team tonight?

BRIAN KEEFE: Guys like that, they generate energy and build confidence for their teammates. There's an energy that he plays with, unselfishness he plays with. That stuff is contagious. You can feel that with our passing.

Obviously he's a scorer too, but his unselfishness is a form of that stuff I really believe is contagious. The ball was moving well tonight. I was really pleased with that.

Q. I know I asked you about the off-ball movement pregame, but the ramp up of Trae, how much do you think that plays a role in a guy like Bub being able to play off of him, a guy like Tre being able to play off of him, in the minutes you saw tonight in that leadup to him being able to debut tonight? How important was that?

BRIAN KEEFE: I think all that stuff is important. It's going to take time to learn chemistry and those things. That's normal. That's normal for any team when someone gets introduced. For a first game, pretty good.

Q. I just wanted to say with regards to Trae Young, I was wondering if maybe he'll get more playtime in the coming games. How much of a factor of course did him getting hit in the face and other things you observed on the court play a role in him being put out for extended periods of time?

BRIAN KEEFE: He wasn't out for very long. Our guys did pretty quick work with him in the back. He was back in pretty quick. We talked about he was going to be on a restriction, and that's because he hasn't played that many games this year.

We're always going to put the health and safety of our players first. We do that for everybody on our team, and nothing is going to change with that.

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