

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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## Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Magic 136, Wizards 131

**Q. What did you think of your team's overall fight and spirit tonight?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Terrific. The best part of the game was how we trusted each other. When we're not shooting the ball well, we kept making the correct play over and over again, in the corner, hitting the guy who was open, and we weren't making our threes, and then all of a sudden we started making them because we just kept the process and we didn't lose momentum because of that, we just kept trusting that. That's what our guys wanted to do.

The competitive juices were great tonight, and obviously we went on a nice run there in the fourth quarter, but we trusted the process of the game, and I was really proud of the guys for that.

**Q. Apart from what you just mentioned, what did you see that you liked in the fourth?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Obviously our defensive intensity went up, but we really scored the ball. But we scored it in a way that was team-like, and obviously Bilal was terrific, but we did it as a group. We did it as a unit. A lot of guys stepped up. It was a mixture of obviously getting stops and then making the right play offensively.

**Q. How pleased are you with the bounce-back off of two nights ago?**

BRIAN KEEFE: This was the next game. That's how I looked at this. It's like, we go game by game, and our guys were ready to play tonight. I knew they would be because they always are, and we prepared the right way, and our guys were ready to go.

I loved how we proceeded throughout the game because it wasn't always going our way. We weren't always making shots. But we stuck with it, and then we turned the tide, and that's part of the stuff that we're learning as a group.

The resiliency was terrific tonight.

**Q. What shifted with Bilal offensively? Was it for him similar to you guys as a team that he just stuck with the process of eventually the shot was going to fall?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think this is a little bit of impact you've seen what Trae Young does. He keeps throwing it to you. He keeps trusting you. He finds the open man. That stuff is contagious. Bilal wasn't shooting the ball great in the first half. But he kept sticking with the process, and then he started getting downhill and started attacking, so he had a little bit of mixture of both.

But terrific. Terrific trust by our team tonight.

**Q. What did you like from him overall, because it's one thing to do what he did offensively, especially late in that game, but also taking on Paolo and limiting him and trying to slow him down, given the first game that he had against you guys I believe he had 36 or 37? It seemed like something shifted in Bilal tonight. What was it?**

BRIAN KEEFE: He's been doing this all year. I don't think anything changed for him. He got in a little bit of foul trouble here the last time and we had to switch the matchup. This guy has been guarding all the elite players in the league and has done an unbelievable job. He's one of the probably top five in a lot of defensive categories. He's just doing what he normally does. Not surprising.

**Q. What went into your decision to employ the five guys you used in overtime, specifically not continuing with Bub?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Bub was actually on a restriction tonight, and I actually -- in talking with medical, actually we pushed it and I got him about a minute and a half over that, and we just couldn't risk that in overtime. That was the decision there.

**Q. That was that hip flexor, correct?**



BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah. Same thing we've been with Khris Middleton, some of those guys throughout the year, so nothing different. Same process.

**Q. What did you see in terms of from Will Riley, in terms of his role in the offense there in that fourth quarter?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Will Riley is a connector in a lot of different ways. He's becoming a big threat. We were playing off his spacing. He's on the scouting report now, and you can tell that how teams are guarding him. He's had a terrific month and a half here scoring the basketball. But he's just a connector in a lot of ways. Tonight he was spacing, finding space for our guys, the secondary play making. I thought his defense was really good, most importantly.

**Q. You touched on something lightly last time facing the Magic, and especially Paolo. Going into the second half last game, there was 20-something fouls total amongst the starters. Fouls were definitely backed off tonight, team seemed a bit more discipline on defense. What was the key to that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think our communication, our physicality, doing our work early. When you're playing great players, you've got to make it tough. You're not going to stop them for the whole game. But big key for these guys is keeping them off the free-throw line. They're really good at drawing them. I thought our guys were super disciplined tonight. I thought that really went into a lot of the run in the fourth quarter. Credit to our guys.

**Q. Would I be wrong in saying that Justin's energy and the way he played gave you guys the spark that allowed you to kind of spearhead that run in the second half and the way that you guys were playing, just with the energy he was bringing and making multiple efforts?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think, yeah, he brings what he brings. You could see his offensive rebounding game, his cutting game going tonight. Great having Jamir back. I thought there was just -- I could probably talk about almost every guy on the roster tonight who contributed in a positive way. The guys stepped up when their opportunities were there. That's what got us to the end there.

**Q. Is Justin on any kind of restriction?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Justin, no.

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