

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Washington, DC, USA

## Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Thunder 132, Wizards 111

**Q. I have to ask about the elephant in the room, the ejection. Obviously Justin was involved with that. What did you see from your vantage point and the explanation from the officials?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I did not see a lot. I just know that our guys stuck up for each other, which I always love. I'll take a look at it here after the game. The refs just kind of -- you probably heard what the ref said: Who's out, who's in, who's shooting the technical. Not much more than that. But we move forward.

**Q. What did you see from Bilal tonight? Obviously we know what you're going to get from him defensively, but it seemed like he was kind of locked in on both ends of the floor, especially in that third quarter.**

BRIAN KEEFE: I just loved his aggressiveness, decisiveness on both ends of the floor. You saw some of the blocks, attacking the rim, the play making. I thought our play making was really good tonight. We ended up having 28 assists, and to be honest with you, to start the fourth, we had some really great looks. The ball movement was really good. Just the ball didn't go in.

But that was the right thing to do. We continued to play right the whole game, but give them credit; they made some tough shots.

**Q. Do you see more confidence in Bilal's game on offense now more so than last season or before that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I think that he's just grown. I think we've talked about this. He had a little bit of start and stop with some of the injuries early, and I think he's just getting his rhythm. I think he's taking advantage of the opportunity. We're obviously putting the ball in his hands. He's obviously playing downhill, but he's been playing really good basketball here for a good stretch.

**Q. The game was pretty close until the last few minutes, against obviously OKC, who won the Finals last year. Does that kind of validate what you guys are doing just in general with the rebuild?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, everybody has got their own path and everybody's team has their own story unique story to it. We've got our own path. We're focused on that. Obviously, that's a great team. But we're focused on what we're doing here, and that's continuing to stack days and build habits. I thought that was a good test for us tonight. I thought we answered a lot of good things. But you've got to give them some credit; they finished off the game well.

**Q. What did you think of the rim protection, particularly early in the game, Alex protecting the rim?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Pretty good early. They probably got a little bit more paint later in the game, but when he's out there you can feel him, and Bilal was doing it and Jamir was doing it, so we had guys making multiple efforts at the rim. But you've got to do it for 48, and we didn't quite do that tonight.

**Q. Are you proud of the energy that your team showed tonight?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, I think our team brings that every night. I think we come with seriousness, ready to play. So I'm always proud of our group. I thought we responded well throughout the game, through different things that happen. Like I said, give them credit; they made some tough shots.

**Q. Alex had eight assists. That's a career high. Are you surprised at that?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I'm not surprised. This is one of the things if you go back in the draft process, this is one of the things we all liked about his was his play-making ability. A lot of times we play through him, off the side of the court, through the elbows. He just has a knack. Now we're playing him in pick-and-rolls. You saw some of the reads he was making out of that. It's pretty unique for a

20-year-old center in the league. Pretty good.

**Q. On your defense, I know Shai is a tough cover for anybody, no matter how good or bad you are as a defender, but the difficulty of shots that you guys forced him into, were you happy with how you guys funneled him and made him not have the easiest type of night as what he's used to?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I mean, he still got what he probably gets, but we kept him off the free-throw line for the most part. I thought he got away from us a little bit there in the third quarter. But this is what good players do, and those are the challenges you're going to get on a nightly basis.

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