

# NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Jalen Williams

Media Day



**Q. Being such a young team, there were some questions about how inexperience might play against you. How are you guys handling that? How has Mark helped with that?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: We try not to feed too much into what the media has to say in regards to inexperience. I guess the thing earlier in the year was, like, being too young. When you're young, I feel like we use it to our advantage. We try not to look at what we can't do and just focus on what we can do and be very really at that.

I think Mark has done a good job of instilling that in us since I've been here the past three years. It's just something that we get harped on in the thing. As we grow through these experiences, young or not, when you can learn from whatever situation you're thrown in, that makes you better. I think that's why we're here in this moment.

**Q. We talk a lot with a Spanish ex-NBA player. He always says that character means more than experience in the Playoffs. I think you guys being such a young group really embodies that. How do you feel about that statement?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: No, I think it's true. I think honestly, I feel like both teams, you look at Indiana, like a closer look at them, they're like us. You can see the team chemistry that they have. You can see they love playing with each other. They enjoy being in these moments together.

They're starting to look like what the blueprint of the NBA is. When you get a group of guys that like playing with each other, like doing stuff for each other, just are constantly willing to make the extra sacrifices, extra plays for each other, as we go through these ups and downs in the season, I think that's what makes you a good team.

**Q. You draw duty defensively where you're asked to guard smaller, guard bigger. What prepared you to be able to handle those type of demands? Any key ingredients to actually being successful at that?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: God had me grow at the right time in college. So, I was short for a long time. I was guarding little guards. Obviously, I grew. I think that kind of helped. Obviously the taller you are, you can guard more positions.

The Thunder did a really good job I think grooming me into that. Just throughout my first year, they put me in so many different situations. I was able to learn from them and get better through the situations.

I just think I was in a really good position to where, like, as a rookie, I was able to do trial and error and do a bunch of stuff like that. So when I get to these moments now, I have had more years under my belt to like learn how to guard smaller and bigger guards. I've been able to grow through the process of doing that.

Defense is a mentality, too. Regardless of who you're guarding, if you go out there and compete, you can be pretty good defensively.

**Q. You said after the Denver series that you hadn't really slept leading up to Game 7. How have you handled the emotions leading up to the series? How have you digested this? Have you had time to put into perspective what it means for you to be in the Finals in year three?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: I haven't really wrapped my head around the fact that I'm in the Finals. I did like the correspondence thing two years ago. I guess it was a year ago. No, two years ago, right? It feels like life has been such a blur since that. I'm still trying to, like, get over the fact that my brother's in the NBA. There's so many things that have happened since then that I'm still trying to take in. It's definitely a blessing that we're here.

I try not to get too caught up in it because we still have a job to do. I'm trying to, like, really focus on that. But whenever I can get a couple days off to really look at it, this past week I've been able to be able to really take a step back and look at how far I came.

**Q. As you've had this sort of longer layoff, a chance to get a closer look at Indiana, what sort of leapt off the**

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**screen about the way they operate offensively? What makes them a different challenge than some of the other offenses you've dealt with?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think everybody has seen it. I don't want to give too much away. They obviously play fast. That's their thing. You kind of got to tip your hat to them. The Playoffs historically is something that slows down pace. For them to impose their will on that, win the last three series they played doing it how they want to do it is really impressive. That's what we've kind of seen.

I don't really think that's a big secret. That's where they're unique.

**Q. It wasn't like you guys are just sort of coming out of nowhere. You were a pretty good team last year. You're so much more dominant this year. With the NET rating, point differential, etc. Was there a moment or have you taken a moment to appreciate how dominant you guys have been? A lot of blowouts, has there been a moment of reflection in the locker room saying guys, this is different than last year?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think like maybe middle of the year. I think not having bigs, you remember Hart [Isaiah Hartenstein] and Chet were out for a majority of the season, too. I think for us to be as successful as we were during that I think was a big moment for us.

At the same time, it's a very, like, weird position you get put in because you want to look back at the regular season, but you really don't get any regular-season awards. You know what I mean?

I think just the playoffs come up so fast, you can't really look back at it. We're trying to win the Finals. That's where our focus is. We can look back on this later on.

I would just say the middle of the year was more, like, where our confidence got going from that.

**Q. Playing alongside Shai as long as you have, what is the biggest thing you've learned from being around him, playing with him?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: His mentality. Just a winner. He just has an "I'm going to get it done" mentality. I think that's kind of rubbed off on the rest of the team. You can always see, he doesn't make excuses. I think that bleeds over into the team.

I would say I've probably taken that from him. I think that's where he's grown up as a leader. Not saying he wasn't earlier on in his career but just for our team he's been

really good leading us that way. He's a good, like, lead-by-example.

**Q. The success on the court obviously expresses itself in terms of bringing you guys closer. How has the city and the region kind of gotten into everybody's skin to feel like this is a great place to be, a great place to operate?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: I've honestly felt like the energy from the city since I've been drafted. When I got here, there was a ton of people outside the hotel, like, waiting to see us, congratulate us.

I always compare it to, like, a small local high school football team being really good, and the city around them kind of gathers around them. That's how Oklahoma is. But it's with that with the whole state. Everywhere we go, I've been met with love since I've been out here. It's a really cool experience.

Even the past two years, I'm really happy I get to be a part of two really good teams. I think it just brings the city more and more life. I'm happy that we get to bring that back here.

**Q. Obviously the playoffs have their ebbs and flows. That can be long in its own way. What have you learned about your game over the last couple of months?**

JALEN WILLIAMS: I wouldn't say I learned anything new about my game. I think what I've learned is there's highs and lows with every series. There's highs and lows with every game. The more that you can stay even throughout it all, the better off you'll be. I think that's where I found a lot of my success.

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