

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

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Oklahoma City Thunder Chet Holmgren

Media Day

Q. Alex Caruso won the championship five years ago when you were 18. Now he's your teammate here. Can you tell us what's the most important thing that you learned from Caruso this year.

CHET HOLMGREN: One of the most important things that he's come in here and taught us is the importance of executing the details. You'll see so many times he makes a huge play out there, and it really comes down to inches. Was he in the right spot by a few inches? Was he able to reach the ball and poke it away by a few inches? That comes down to knowing where you need to be and when you need to be there, what you need to do and how to execute it. He's really come in and preached the importance of that, kind of shown us firsthand what that looks like.

It's been big. It's helped all of us. It's been big having him.

Q. What is the pressure that the Pacers put on opposing bigs with just having five guys who can shoot threes?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, I think I can speak firsthand on this. We can do similar things at times with some of the ways that we play. It really opens up the floor. It's not even so much about opening up the floor and being able to attack just the five. It comes down to opening up the floor for everybody else to be able to attack as well.

It really comes down to being able to play solid, kind of defeat the point of attack.

Q. Were you aware that Donnie [Strack] got his start in the league as a Pacers ballboy?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yes, I was.

Q. What kind of impact has he had on you trying to rehab?

CHET HOLMGREN: I couldn't say enough. I've spent



respectfully a lot more time with Donnie than I'd ever wish to [smiling]. Not because Donnie is not a great dude or one of the best at his job in the NBA. Just because if you're with him, that means you're hurt. Trying to avoid that.

He's been amazing. I don't think there's been any hiccups in any of my kind of healing processes. He's a big part of that, so. It's much appreciated.

Q. What have these last few days been like for you? Mark was talking about your insatiable, unwavering hunger for more information, to dig into this matchup, some of the fundamentals that you were talking about earlier. What has this been like for you as a competitor preparing mentally?

CHET HOLMGREN: I mean, it's been great. I love the playoffs personally because in the regular season you'll run into situations where the schedule is really beating another team down. They'll kind of take a game to reload and everything. Towards the end of the season, some teams are playing for certain things or have different I guess you could say intentions.

But in the playoffs, you get everybody's best shot every single night, which is the way you want it to be. It's been great to be able to learn from every single night, try to figure out how to be better for the next one.

You're also seeing the same team for two weeks rather than playing a new team every single night. You're really able to take a deep dive, get into things. It's really like a puzzle. You got to take the time to figure it out rather than in the regular season I feel like you're just working on your own stuff and trying to build yourself throughout the whole season. In the playoffs, it's then taking that and also trying to kind of figure out the other team.

Q. Where do you feel better or more evolved as a player? You mentioned the playoffs, last year's run. Where have you gotten better?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, I feel like I see the game better in different ways. Obviously last year we had a very defined play style and we kind of lived or died with it. This

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year we have a lot of different looks that we can throw at teams.

I feel like I still have a long ways to go and I can improve in so many different things on both ends of the ball. Being able to kind of see those situations and work on them, I feel like I've been able to improve on them.

Q. Your team, obviously you're all young. Shai is the MVP. You're an enormous talent. Yet you guys don't seem bothered at all by who the guy is at any given time, as long as you guys are winning, you're cool with that. That's not common for young teams. Why do you guys make it all work?

CHET HOLMGREN: I'd say the biggest thing is playing for each other, one. Two, the type of guys that we have here. If you ask anybody, everybody's going to tell you that they're a winner. Everybody is a winner until it's inconvenient for them. You know what I'm saying?

I feel like we have a team with 17 winners that are going to put winning at the top of the totem pole over anything else really.

Does that mean you're guaranteed a win every single night? No. But when that's the main focus, and you're not working towards anything else, you're able to kind of chase that better than if you had a different perspective on it.

Q. Chet, you mentioned earlier viewing these series as sort of like a puzzle you have to put together, teams you have to solve. When you look at this Indiana team, what's the most important puzzle piece you have to try to figure out to try to solve them?

CHET HOLMGREN: That puzzle is also a secret, you know [smiling]. That's my answer. Sorry, I wish I could give you more, but...

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