

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Sunday, June 22, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder Isaiah Hartenstein

Game 7: Postgame

Oklahoma City Thunder 103, Indiana Pacers 91

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: What's up, y'all? This is my nephew Shawn.

Q. Talk me through the emotions of this moment. Can you talk a little bit about Mark. He defers to you guys a lot when we ask him why you've been so good so quick. Your feeling about his role on this.

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think the first thing is gratitude. I think it's a privilege to be in these situations. It's a privilege to feel this pressure. So now to get it done, the emotions, you can't really describe.

I think all of us on our team has been through certain struggles. So now to be here together, something really special.

You can't say enough about Mark, man. From the first day I got here, the way he approaches each day. Even this short time, he's meant a lot to me. Whenever I had questions, he was always there for me.

He's very stoic in a sense. I think that helped us all kind of stay through the ups and downs in the Playoffs. We all stayed similar. So I think he's amazing. He's also an amazing person off the court. He really cares. He really cares about us. It's like little details. We bring our kids around. He's the first one to interact with them. If you have any problems off the court, he's always open to talk to you. Yeah, he's really special, even in the short time, to me.

Q. Take me back when Sam and whoever talked to you about coming to Oklahoma City. I'm sure championship came up. Now you actually get it done.

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: Yeah, I know they were probably pissed a little bit at the beginning because my agent told them I was in Houston, so they were going to fly to Houston first. It was like an hour flight. I told my agent,



No, I'm in Eugene, Oregon. I think it added about four more hours to their flight.

To have them come all the way out to Eugene to show the interest they had in me, but also how they wanted to help me get better, yeah, a lot of gratitude for Sam believing in me and giving me a chance to be in this situation. Just grateful.

Q. You talk about the pressure, privilege. How much pressure did you feel in comparison to what Indiana felt? How much pressure did you feel as a team to win this title not just for yourself but to validate what you'd accomplished to this point?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think you can look at it a different way. I think throughout the season, you all always heard we're too young, we're not experienced enough, when we had a great season. When the Playoffs were going to start, we haven't gone through enough to get here.

I think the Pacers are kind of similar in that sense where the world kind of doubted us for a sec. I think we just proved that we wanted it more. I think, again, a lot of respect for the Pacers team. I think they did an amazing job. I think Rick, the coach, did an amazing job with his in-game adjustments, how he approached each game. A lot of respect to them, too.

Q. This was your first season playing with Shai. He's had so many moments late in games where he seems unfazed by the moment. What is your perspective of his composure?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think he has a unique mindset. I think he gives us a lot of confidence. Like we say all season, he's always zero and zero. I don't think he ever gets too high, too low. A great leader on and off the court. He also puts the work in. If you see him on a daily basis, the work he puts in on and off the court, the way he leads. I've been with a lot of players, a lot of superstars, but just how ego-less he is really makes him special.

I wouldn't have thought it when I played with him in the Nike Hoops Summit that he would now be NBA MVP, Finals MVP. You just have to respect his work ethic, for

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sure.

Q. Since you brought Shawn out with you, when times get hard, he's out there trying to accomplish his goals, what advice will you give to him?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think just stay in the present moment. I think that's the biggest thing. I think I've been through so many up and downs in my career. I think when you get too far ahead or too far back in life, that's kind of when your emotions get too much.

I think just staying present, working as hard as you can, just knowing there's going to be times where everything doesn't work out. I think everything happens for a reason. I don't think I would change my career for anything. I think that helped me in moments like these, for sure.

Q. What was the celebration like when you got to the locker room? When I went there, I didn't see bottles popping.

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I mean, first of all, none of us knew how to do it (laughter). It was more like YouTube tutorials. We were asking AC how to do it. It was not really in sync because no one really knew how to do it. Yeah, shout-out to AC for kind of teaching us how to pop champagne, I guess (smiling).

Q. You seriously didn't know how to open a champagne bottle?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: No. When I won in Lithuania, they just drank hard tequila. Just hard liquor straight.

Yeah, we had to learn from AC. He did a great job giving us the tutorial. We're grateful for him.

Q. You won 84 games. Only two teams won more than that. Scored more points in a season than any team in NBA history. You're the youngest champion in half a century. How real is it to think this could be the start of something really good for you guys?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: That's a hard question. I think, again, we're going to go have some fun. But I think we have a good chance. Again, you always have to prove it again. Next season starts, training camp, everything is 0-0. It doesn't matter what you did the year before. But I think we have a good group of guys. First, we're going to focus on having a little fun, going from there.

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