

All-Star Game: Team Durant vs. Team LeBron

Monday, February 21, 2022

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Team Durant

Joel Embiid

Press Conference



Team LeBron 163, Team Durant 160

Q. I know that Steph got MVP, but it just teams like you came out here trying to attack, trying to put on a show, trying to get that award.

JOEL EMBIID: Yeah, I mean, I really wanted to win the game. That was my focus coming in, so doing whatever it took to actually accomplish that, and then obviously, Steph got it, and he was making shots all over the place. But, yeah, that was a mindset to try and come out and win the game.

Q. Did you see the ceremony at halftime? And just looking at all the NBA greats that were around here, I mean, what was that experience like for you?

JOEL EMBIID: It was great. I aspire to be up there at some point when I'm done. Even before I'm done. Obviously, you have got to win. Talent-wise, could be up there, but got to win a championship, so that's the goal for me every single day, the work I put in to try to accomplish that.

Q. In the fourth quarter there you were going back and forth with Giannis. How competitive is this new format? And are you happy with the changes that the league has made?

JOEL EMBIID: It's been great. My first year, that was the first year that they changed it to that format, and then last year it was unfortunate I wasn't part of it, but this year it was great. I just heard him say it, I'm competitive. It's hard for me. Even the first quarter when everybody was going regular speed and not really playing any defense, and I just felt uncomfortable because I just want to win and do whatever it takes.

But it's great. There was a lot of back and forth. I thought both teams did well, so on to next year.

Q. You say your life is like a movie a lot. What goes through your mind when you are introduced in the starting lineup as a five-time NBA All-Star?

JOEL EMBIID: Man, it's amazing. Like you said, I always said it, everything just happens so fast. Year after year. If you want to go through the timeline of everything happening in my life, whether it's 10, 11 years ago really starting to play basketball, and within three years making it to the league. And, obviously, my first few years, there was a chance that I could never play basketball ever in the NBA, and all of a sudden getting the chance to get on the court and try to show what I can do and trying to help us get wins. To this point where I'm a five-time NBA All-Star.

So, it is a blessing. I can never take it for granted. You just have to come out every single year and try to prove that you belong to be on this stage, and that's what I try to do.

Q. My question is, you know, with all the trades and everything going on, what are your hopes for after the All-Star just with the different people that are now on your team? What do you hope for after that?

JOEL EMBIID: We got to get on the floor together and try to build chemistry, and we've got a great of great players in James Harden, who has been the league MVP and all that stuff, scoring titles, so he has experience. I think it's going to be easy to build that chemistry.

Everybody is on the same page. We all are trying to win a championship, so that's the goal. I think it's all about everybody just staying healthy and getting on the floor and us getting together and really playing together.

Q. You mentioned before that you missed those first two years of your career. How often do you think about that when you are in moments like this? Do you think back to what could have been?

JOEL EMBIID: Yeah, it's crazy, actually. You look back at my first year after the surgery. Obviously, I lost my brother at that time, too. Going back to Cameroon, I really wanted



to stop playing basketball and really retire because at that point you just had surgery, and everybody is talking about you're not going to make it or you're never going to play in the league, and, obviously, the loss of my brother was big. I wanted to give up. I almost did. It was hard.

Then the second year you've got to get another surgery. That basically you miss two years in a row, and all these stories coming out every single day. Oh, Joel is whatever, 300 pounds, and the media always talking down on you. It was tough. I had to go through a lot. It was very tough, but I'm glad I just kept pushing through with the help of everybody around me, but I'm just glad. I'm happy to be here.

Q. Joel, based off of the stuff that you just said, let's think about last year. At this point last year, you were averaging 30 points. Right now you're averaging 29.6, right? Then you came back. You had an injury. Then you had another injury. What's your mindset now going into this final third? Is it like I just have got to stay healthy or are you saying, forget it, I can't think about that stuff, I just have to play ball? This point last year you were on fire, and then you just had those injuries down the stretch.

JOEL EMBIID: The crazy thing about me is that, obviously, I haven't gotten injured in a long time, and I haven't missed a long period of time for a very long time. So, every single time -- even when I came back from really the first three years that I missed, it never crossed my mind that I had to go easy, try to make sure that I didn't get hurt. My mindset was always, like, just going on the court. Whatever happens happens. I believe in God. I pray. I'm Catholic, so I was, like, I'm just going to do my thing. I'm going to try. I'm going to do my best. Whatever happens happens. That's always my mindset.

Going back, obviously, I've done a better job taking care of myself, and this is where it's really going to show, and this is where I even have got to do even more to make sure that the same thing doesn't happen this year, but I'm excited. We've got a great team. I've got to play every single game, so we can all play together and really figure out how to play with each other, but it's going to be fun.

Q. With regards to saying you have to play every game, has this year been different for you to a point where there certain times where you may not feel well or your wrist is hurt or something like that, but just say, look, I missed too many games before, I got to gut it out now?

JOEL EMBIID: You can never control it. You look at this year. I've really only missed three games. The COVID

stuff happened, and I missed eight or nine games. That's the stuff you can't control. There hasn't been any injury that hasn't allowed me to be on the floor. It's been about really managing and making sure that I'm also ready for the playoffs.

But I just want to be on the court. With the All-Star break coming up, I didn't want to stop. Feel good. My body feels great. We're playing well as a team. I just want to keep building every single day, so by the time we get to the playoffs, we are ready.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

