

All-Star Game: Team Durant vs. Team LeBron

Monday, February 21, 2022

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Team LeBron

Giannis Antetokounmpo

Press Conference

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Q. Can you describe your feelings being around all these great NBA legends?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It was a great feeling. Man, you know, when you start playing basketball when you are young, you never imagine to be next to all these all-time greats. Your name being called, going out there to shake their hands and just stand next to them, interact with them, it was amazing. I kind of teared up on stage because I'm not supposed to be here, man. Being among those guys is -- man, it's crazy.

Q. Just a follow-up on that. In the photo session did you want to seek out Allen, and what were you able to say or not say to Michael Jordan with your handshake?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I've never met Michael Jordan before. I saw him one time in Charlotte while we were playing a game, but I've never had the chance to introduce myself to him. I asked if he was here. They told me he was not here at first, but then I saw him when he came out and I was kind of in shock. Arguably the best player to ever play the game.

Man, it was crazy. I just went up there to introduce myself to him. I was kind of surprised he knew who I was. I'm joking. It was fun to just get to shake his hand and talk to him for five seconds. It was fun.

Q. Giannis, staying on this note, you say you were telling yourself "I'm not supposed to be here." Reflecting on your story and where you're coming from, does being here and knowing that you are here and you're the Finals MVP, two-time MVP, does it make it more real and more incredible what you have done in your life?



GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I'm just trying to live in the moment. I'm not thinking about the accolades I have accomplished in the past, but yeah, it doesn't hit me. When they told me I'm going to be in the 75 best players of all time, I was, like, okay. Keep on moving. I went to practice. I did my routine. I went back to my family. Enjoyed my time with my family. It was kind of the same, but it kind of hits you when you are among those guys. Once you walk into a building, a room that you see Allen Iverson and Kevin Garnett, Jason Kidd, Paul Pierce, Magic Johnson, LeBron James, Steph Curry, James Harden, Damian Lillard, you see all these guys, man, it kind of hits you. It's an unreal feeling.

I'm not sure -- I'm going to ask you guys. There were only two Europeans in this team, right? That's even more -- that's insane. Okay, sitting next to Michael Jordan and stuff, that's great and LeBron and Carmelo, John Stockton, Ray Allen. Having the opportunity to sit next to Dirk, that kind of opened the path for us, that's even more incredible feeling for me. I watched him play when I was a kid when he was winning the championship for the Dallas Mavericks. He was one of us. He came from Europe. That's incredible.

Hopefully Luka, Jokic, more European players can follow Dirk's lead and my lead and hopefully more African players can follow Hakeem's lead. In 25 years we'll do it again and there are going to be more people, not American people, in the group.

Q. After the All-Star, what is your hope for the team?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Right now, I got three days to rest. I haven't taken a break at all. Probably, yeah, we'll go back, it's the same thing. Enjoy the game, build good habits, try to win games. Obviously, we want to be one of the teams that plays at the end of the season in June.

Yeah, just take it day by day, and hopefully we can be one of those teams. If we do the right things, why not? I think we have the talent. We have a great culture, we play hard and hopefully we can be one of those teams.

Q. What would you say a challenge is for right now?



Do you feel that there is a challenge? What is your hopes or anything for this season?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I take it day by day. I do not like -- I do not start the season and say, A, I want to win a championship. I just try to improve every single day. I've done that my whole career and then it kind of worked for me. I try to enjoy as much as possible whatever I do because that's the only way I can prolong what I love to do and not put pressure on myself.

At the end of the day, everybody that plays the game wants to win a championship. But to be realistic, there's only four, five, six teams that can do that. For us, we won a championship last year. For sure the goal is to go back-to-back. But there are steps to it. The number one thing for us now is to take a break, mentally and physically. Once we get back, build good habits, play with one another, build good chemistry and when the time is there and we get in the playoffs, the goal is to, obviously, win a championship. But there's steps to it. You cannot just jump to that.

Q. What do you think of these games, and specifically tonight, you've got Steph making 16 threes. No one has made that many threes.

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's crazy. How many did I make? Zero (Laughing).

Q. We're also wondering why you didn't shoot one last night instead of your brother. But, anyway, going back and forth between getting caught up in what Steph is doing and also trying to win, what was that fourth quarter like tonight?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I was just trying to win. I'm really competitive. Kind of the All-Star Games, they are not built for me. Obviously, I come out here and try to enjoy the game as much as possible, but I don't know how not to go hard. I kind of feel terrible when I'm walking around because I always try to go full speed no matter what I do because that's how -- what type of player I am.

But when you see a guy like Steph knocking down threes like that and putting on a show, you don't want him to lose the game. As a teammate, even though I'm not his teammate in real life -- not in real life, but in the regular season -- for tonight I thought he deserved to be the guy that won the MVP. I just tried to win the game and make plays that can help my team win. That was my mindset.

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