Development of Oklahoma City Thunder and the Management Strategies Made

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Abstract: The essay is about the overall analysis about team strategies made by Oklahoma City Thunder, a franchise in National Basketball League from 2008 to 2022. The analysis covers ups and downs of the franchise regarding its performance in the league and competitiveness. The basis of the analysis is through team transactions and the team philosophies that lead to these transactions or team trades. To analyze the team trades I decided to dig deep into players' stats not only regular but also advanced stats to figure out the value of each tradeand the reasearch also incorporates draft picks accumulated from trades to evaluate the anticipate the team's next move. Last but not the least the essay also covers team's revenue throughout the years from the perspective of gate revenue and merchandising.

Keywords: Trades Drafts Philosophies Future Propspects.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to explain and examine why the Oklahoma City Thunder, even though located in a small market as Oklahoma is a state with a tiny population and a poor economy (ranked 43rd in domestic GDP ranking), has achieved great popularity around the world and has made huge impact to the league as well from the perspective of their competitiveness and what they have achieved in only more than a decade, from 2008 till now. (14 years)

2. Methods/Procedures

To develop the research paper, the work will first focus on the history of the team before they were renamed as Thunder. This is specifically the story of Seattle SuperSonics which was the previous existence of Oklahoma City Thunder. To conduct this, former players who brought Seattle SuperSonics to its prime such as Gary Payton, Shawn Kemp and Ray Allen will be evaluated in this paper. We can find affluent stats and records from basketball-reference.com about team records each year and leading stars' stats.

After researching basic information and history of the former Seattle SuperSonics, the next step is to find out the reason why the last owner of SuperSonics chose to quit from decently large market in Seattle and instead, moving the team to a small city in Oklahoma. Here we can compare the market capacity between two locations by evaluating the team revenue between the last year of SuperSonics and the first year of Thunder. During this process we can make charts to list down pros and cons to relocate.

Moreover, the next procedure is to examine each season of Thunder from 2009 to 2020 because 2020 is the last playoff appearance for this team. More specifically, just like the method get explained, when gleaning information about Seattle SuperSonics, the work could be developed using the same website. It is easy to find out that started from the second season-the 2009-2010 season Thunder leaped to top teams in regular season with the record of 50 wins and 32 loses and was stopped by the first round of Western conference playoffs. Thus, to find out the catalyst which enables Thunder to make such progress the paper is planned to incorporate not only the study on players' stats but also study on the salary system, coaching system and especially drafting of the team regarding the growing new blood as two years later the team only attained 20 wins in Seattle.

The next phase of the team is the prime time when they continuously made into conference finals and even finals from 2010 to 2016. This fact enhances the importance of successful draft picks made by scouts and GMs. But this also led to a problem of salary distribution as rookies were becoming superstars. Here the data in this work is required, about league's soft and compulsory salary caps and luxury taxes while record them in tables while also record the development of players' salaries each year and compare those numbers to the highest salary to certain players each season in bar charts to reveal the difficulty for the team executives to keep those rising stars in the roster and also unravel the decisive factor which led to the disintegration of such super team. During this period it's also important to be knowledgeable about the opponents such as Miami Heat and Golden State Warriors who beat Thunder every time in conference finals and finals. Therefore data about salaries are also compulsory, player stats and keep them in charts cater for the comparison between Thunder.

Last but not the least the paper will include content about current Thunder and make anticipations about its future. Therefore it's necessary to find out why Thunder, even though possesses new competitive rookies such as Shai- Gilgeous Alexander, Trey Mann and Josh Giddey, still couldn't get positive results in this work. For the future, Thunder is conducting a strange method of stocking draft picks which allowed them to have 19 first round picks till 2025 [1]. Hence it's essential to figure about trades that Thunder made to get those picks and find out the reason for Thunder to do so.

3. Research Content

3.1. Why this topic?

The research topic is valuable and useful because of the particularity of the team being a successful and influential team located in a small city with small market. Thus this contrast to teams like Los Angeles Lakers which enjoys a much larger market and possesses a much larger fan base. Therefore these teams are self-explanatory, but Thunder, as an exception, became exciting and time-worthy to research.

3.2. Team Development

Before the 2005-2006 regular season, Seattle SuperSonics was always considered as a prestigious team with glorious history and decent record. In 2004-2005 regular Season, coached by Nate McMillan with the record of 52-30 and between that year and the prime year, the 1997-1998 season with the record of 61-21 led by great "gloves" Gary Payton averaging 19.2 points per game plus 8.4 assists and 2.3 steals (according to basketball-reference.com), their winning percentage were all more or close to 50% except for 2003-2004 season with 45.7% of wins. Hence we can see that the plunge of the team was exactly the year started in 2005 and ends in 2007. So focusing on rules introduced between 1998 to 2007 and focusing on the difference between revenue and the expenditure of the team is the key to find out the reason why Seattle SuperSonics suddenly became a subpar team and finally relocated. In 2004 NBA banned hand-checking rules to make the game more offensive and

fluent so that the league and owners can attract more audience and earn a higher revenue but it was not favored by senior players as they had to change their way of playing and defense. Moreover the league changed the game ball in 2006 and published dress-code to rebuild the league's image. For owners, in the same year high school players were banned from directly been drafted and was compulsory to play for college for at least a year. Therefore competition for talents between franchises became more drastic.

With worsening records and big changes in rules Seattle SuperSonics was obviously losing audience and gate revenue, and the failed effort to raise funding worth $220 million from the Washington State government to update the home arena for the team (the KeyArena), the former owner Howard Shultz sold the team to the PBC, "an investment group headed by Oklahoma City businessman Clay Bennett." [2].

After the relocation the first season of OKC wasn't good under the lead of Nick Collison, the rookies Kevin Durant and Jeff Green, with the poor record of only 23 wins. But the season showed the importance of successful draft picks and great potential for rookies in the team, especially Kevin Durant drafted at the second with 25.3 ppg. In 2008 and 2009 the team drafted Russell Westbrook and James Harden. To evaluate these players better the advanced game stats are utilized such as usage percentage, true shooting percentage, and players' defensive and offensive ratings. The usage percentage is an estimate of the percentage of team plays used by a player while they were on the floor. The true shooting percentage is a measure of shooting efficiency that takes into account 2-point field goals, 3-point field goals. Players' defensive and offensive ratings are estimates of points produced and allowed others to score per 100 possessions. These stats not only determines players' actual efficiency on the court but also indicates the contributions. The next phase of Thunder is 2017-2019 after Kevin Durant was traded to GSW and Paul George came to Oklahoma as a partner of Russ Westbrook. However, with two decent regular seasons, the playoff journeys were terrible for this duo so finding stats for players can answer the reason for the failure. After 2019-2020 season, the last appearance of OKC Thunder, the team decided to rebuild by trading Westbrook, Steven Adams, Chris Paul and Paul George. These trades provided the team with 19 first round draft picks and a new star player—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. The big rules change for drafts and sources of talent again led the GM to focus on drafts. More high school players chose to enter professional leagues after graduate instead of entering NCAA, which enable them to have more experience. For example in 2017 OKC used their 21st pick to select Terrance Ferguson who played for Australia professional league. Moreover, g league, or NBA development started to emerge more talents such as Jalen Green and Jonathan Kuminga picked at second and seventh in the draft this year.

The major opponents of OKC in two periods should be Miami Heat and Golden State Warriors as Heat beat Thunder in finals in 2012 while GSW beat Thunder in west conference finals in 2016 which indirectly led to the trade about Kevin Durant. After 2017 to 2019 the opponents should be Houston Rockets, Utah Jazz and Portland Trailblazers who eliminated OKC in three consecutive first rounds. After 2020 Houston Rockets and Orlando Major became teams that OKC should compete for better draft picks as these three teams are all during rebuilding.

In 2008-2009 season, the team drafted Russel Westbrook at fourth pick. In his last college year Russell Westbrook had 53.8% of true shooting percentage and 5.3 winning share index [3]. The main reason for OKC to pick Russell Westbrook was indeed because of his decent performance and willingness to defend. "Nevertheless, Westbrook has surprised scouts with his tenacity and willingness to defend. A mediocre jumper is a curable problem, but you can never teach someone the will to defend." [4]. Moreover, Westbrook had explosive athletic ability which was also used to attract audience. "Athletic and explosive combo guard with the length to make up for his lack of height. Attacks the basket with a lethal first step and crossover ability …" [5]. Cooperated with Kevin Durant

in his second season as a potential all-time scorer, even though Thunder had pretty bad record, 23-59 but had a huge improvement in audience attendance —766,868 ranked 11th among 30 teams [6].

In November 22, 2008 the team appointed Scott Brooks as the new head coach to replace P.J. Carlesimo (with poor 1-12 record) which matches team's philosophy of fast rebuilding. Under his influence the pace factor of the season for Thunder was 93.6 ranked 8th and fast offensive pattern started to build. This season, for PER, this value for Kevin Durant was 20.8 and for Russell Westbrook was 15.2, both above average value of 15. The next move of the team is to draft James Harden in the first round with the 3rd pick. "The 2009 NBA draft cemented Sam Presti's legacy as an elite talent evaluator in the NBA." [7]. Thus after the draft the team under the lead of the GM Sam Presti and coach Brooks, Thunder finished its rebuild in two years after three consecutive drafts.

The next phase of the franchise is obviously to be competitive and strive for a championship with the philosophy of basing on the big three and utilize the relatively cheaper rookie contracts to find as many helpers as possible. In 2009-2010 season, Kevin Durant earned $4,796,880, James Harden earned $4,054,160 and Russell Westbrook earned $3,755,640 [7,8]. This year under the leading of the big three Oklahoma City Thunder achieved a decent record with 50wins and 32 loses. The defensive rating improved a lot to 104.6, ranked 9th in NBA and last year the rating was 109.4, raked 20th. The big three inevitably made to the playoffs for the first time and was beaten by Los Angeles Lakers, the champion of that season in the first round. The advantage for the franchise was eminent. The total wage of the team was $58,578,614 ranked 28th in the league. Comparing to Los Angeles Lakers with $91,378,064, the team had huge space to operate further. " The National Basketball Association today announced that the Salary Cap for the 2009-10 season will be $57.7 million." [9].

2010-2011 was a fantastic season for the team as they attained a 55-27 record with Offensive rating 111.2, ranked 5th in NBA and made it to the conference final (1-4 versus Dallas Mavericks) This year the team maintained its philosophy as setting the big three as the core of the team. A big trade of the year happened when Jeff Green was traded to Boston with Nenad Kristic. In receive, they got Kendrick Perkins and Nate Robinson. They also traded Morris Peterson and D.J white to Charlotte bobcats for Nazr Mohammed. This move saved about 2 million dollars of space for them to maintain The Three Big as the team's main philosophy. The total salary for Thunder in 2010-2011 was $55,922,488. Next year OKC reached its pinnacle finished with 47-19 with 109.8 offensive rating, ranked 2nd in NBA and eventually the team made to the finals against Miami Heat. This year Thunder started to clear more space for the big three by trading Robert Vaden, Byron Mullens for a second round pick in 2012 and two second round pick in 2013. The next step was to sign Russell Westbrook to a multi year contract. This year Kevin Durant's wage rises to $15,506,632 and it was Russell Westbrook's last year as a rookie with rookie contract. Comparing the champion that year , the super team Miami Heat with three players who received more than $15,000,000, Thunder still had plenty of space as they traded players for draft picks which didn't require further payment.

After losing finals the team philosophy began to shift as Russell Westbrook and James Harden finished their rookie contracts and the team was weak in interior defense. Even though the offensive rating was high, the defensive rating was only 103.2 ranked 11th out of 30. So the team chose to sign a new contract to keep Serge Ibaka the player they drafted in 2008 but didn't play until 2009 as he was playing in Spanish league when he was drafted. In 2011-2012 season his defensive winning share was 4.1 much higher than James Harden's 1.8. Thus in order to keep the center Thunder traded Cole Aldrich, Daquan Cook, James Harden and Lazar Hayward to Houston Rockets, receiving Jeremy Lamb, Kevin Martin and a 2013 first round draft pick which helped the team to pick Steven Adams, a seven foot center to enhance defense. Eventually the team paid Ibaka with $2,253,061 rather than James Harden.

In 2012-2013 season James has salary worth $5,820,416 paid by Houston Rockets. The result was conspicuous, the defensive rating of the team climbed to 102.6 ranked 4th in NBA and that year the

team finished with 60-22 which was a perfect record. "Ibaka is allowing opponents to shoot only 42.2 percent at the rim while challenging eight shots per game [10]. Later in the season to enhance backcourt defense Thunder traded Archie Goodwin and cash to the Golden State Warriors for Andre Roberson who played defense extremely well in collage with defensive rating as 88.1 averaged in three years, better than Goodwin's 99.1. Thus far the team's philosophy was still very clear which was to build a team carried by Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook on offense and guarded by Steven Adams and Serge Ibaka in paint as well as a lockdown defender Andre Roberson assisting on back court. Next season Ibaka's wage rises to $12,250,000 with Kevin Durant having $19 million and Russell Westbrook having $14.6 million.

The team hooded its philosophy for the next few seasons. In 2013-2014 season assisted by Andre Roberson and Steven Adams, the team started to reach a balance between offense and defense ranked both 6th in ratings. The team achieved another decent record with 58 wins. On July 11th, As part of a 3-team trade, Thunder traded Kevin Martin and cash to the Minnesota Timberwolves and cash to Milwaukee Bucks. Thudner received Szymon Szewczyk, a 6-10 242lb center from Poland from Bucks. This way Thunder cleared space and further enhanced the height of the roster. Kevin Martin's contract was $6,500,000 that season. Furthermore on January 7th 2014 Thunder made another 3-team trade, sent cash to Memphis and traded Ryan Gomes to Boston Celtics, and Thunder received a second round pick in 2014 and a second round pick in 2017. This way Thunder saved $1,186,459 to continue its philosophy of keeping Kevin Durant Russell Westbrook and Serge Ibaka in the team to balance offense and defense.

The 2014-2015 season was a slump for the team. They finished with 47 wins and didn't make into playoffs. "The Thunder would suffer from injuries, mainly to Kevin Durant, who underwent surgery and was shut down for the rest of the season. "Oklahoma City Thunder General Manager Sam Presti announced Friday that Kevin Durant, the reigning NBA most valuable player, will be removed from all basketball activities because of lingering soreness in his surgically repaired right foot." [11]. 2015-2016 season was the last season of the duo and with the return of Kevin's Durant, Thunder still had great opportunity of wining a title.

In July 2015 Thunder consecutively signed Kyle Singler, Cameron Payne and Enes Kanter to multi-year contract to keep enough role players if Kevin decided to leave. The team philosophy was still to assist the duo and save space for further contract as there was possibility for Kevin Durant to resign. To clear space, the team traded Perry Jones, cash and a 2019 second round pick to Boston Celtics for a 2018 second round draft pick. Later in the season in June 2016, Thunder traded Serge Ibaka to Orlando Magic for Ersan Ilyasova, Victor Oladipo and Domantas Sabonis to make the roster more healthy and young while clearing Serge's big contract worth $12,250,000 otherwise the total wage will exceed salary cap of the season at 70 million dollars. After dealing with Serge's contract Thunder still had to pay about $88million ranked 3rd in team payroll. That year with one of the highest expenditure in the franchise's history Thunder lost western conference finals to Golden State Warriors who made a come-back win with a 1-3 deficit.

Next year is a big year for Thunder marketing their next phase. Firstly the team signed Alex Abrines, Russell Westbrook, Domantas Sabonis and Ronnie Price with multi-year contracts to compensate the loss of Kevin Durant. "Kevin Durant became an unrestricted free agent on July first. ESPN.com's Marc Stein reported that 'Kevin Durant will sign a two-year deal with the Golden State Warriors at $54.3 million" [12]. Thus the philosophy of the became to replenish the team with new, young forces and keep the star Russell Westbrook to attract more stars to join. Then they traded Ersan Ilyasova and a 2022 first round draft pick te Philadelphia 76ers for Jerami Grant, and later that year Thunder traded Joffrey Lauverage, Anthony Morrow and Cameron Payne to the Chicago Bulls for Taj Gibson Doug McDermott and a 2018 second round pick. This worked successfully next year

regrading Thunder's strategy/philosophy to rebuild the team shortly by trading and appeal stars to come.

In offseason 2017, the team successfully traded Victor Oladipo and Domantas Sabonis to Indiana Pacers for multiple time Allstar Paul George with the contract of $19,300,000. Four days later the team signed Raymond Felton and Patrick Patterson to a multi-year contract as well as Andre Roberson and Dakari Johnson. On July 29th the team signed Terrance Ferguson from pro league in Australia to a multi-year contact who was just 19 years old showing Thunder's philosophy to rebuild the team with young players

On September 25th 2017 Thunder successfully finished rebuilding by trading Enes Kanter, Doug McDermott and a second round pick to New York Knicks for prime Carmelo Anthony. Thus, Thunder dedicated to be a championship contender again within one year by collecting role players and kept the star Russell Westbrook and trade with teams who decided to rebuild for their all stars. Hence the team philosophy now again altered to strive for championship. They finished 4th in NBA Western Conference with the record of 48-34 but lost to Utah Jazz in the first round led by rookie Donovan Mitchell. It turns out that the big three seemed not compatible with the system of the team as three players all require high usage percentage so the PER were low. For Paul George, his PER for this season was 18.7 but last season in Indiana the number was 20.2. Same as Carmelo Anthony, his PER was extremely low and was subpar in the team with only 12.7 and last season the number was 17.9. Thus the team's philosophy became, again, to build the team based on the dynamic duo. Thus in July, Sam Presti signed Paul George as a free agent and kept Jerami Grant and other young forces in the team. Next, Thunder made a 3-team trade by sending Carmelo Anthony and a 2022 first round pick to Atlanta Hawks and received Dennis Schroeder, and Philadelphia also traded Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot to Thunder.

Then in February 1, 2019 Thunder traded Luwawu-Cabarrot and cash to Chicago Bulls for a 2020 second round draft pick. That season Paul George had an enormous improvement by nominated as a top three MVP contender of the regular season with highest PER and winning share in his career. However, Thunder was still beat by Portland Trail Blazers in the first round due to Russell Westbrook's poor performance. Since now Sam Presti realized that, after serial of losing in first rounds, it was time to rebuild the team. Then the team's philosophy was to collect draft picks as bargaining power and capitalizing the advantage of Sam Presti as an "excellent talent finder" This philosophy wasn't unprecedented but instead actually proved successfully by Golden State Warriors by wining three championships in five years with the lineup almost fully drafted by themselves such as Stephen Curry: 2009 7th pick, Klay Thompson 2011 11th pick, Draymond Green, 2012 35th pick and Harrison Barnes, 2012 7th pick.

To achieve this Thunder started to sign players with two-way contracts and trade rookies for better draft picks in order to clear space and rebuild. In July, Thunder signed Luguentz Dort to a two-way contract and traded Brandon Clarke to Memphis Grizzlies for Darius Bailey and a second round pick. Then Thunder traded Jerami Grant to Denver Nuggets for a first round top10 protected draft pick. After that Thunder decided to trade star player for more high quality draft picks by sending Paul George to LA Clippers for Danilo Gallinari, Shai Gulgeous Alexander, a 2021 first round draft pick, a 2022 first round draft pick, two 2023 first round draft picks, a 2024 first round draft pick, a 2025 draft pick and a 2026 first round draft pick. Six days later Thunder traded Russell Westbrook to Houston Rockets for Chris Paul, a 2021 first round draft pick, a 2024 first round draft pick, a 2025 first round draft pick and a 2026 first round draft pick. However with great leadership of Chris Paul and great performance brought by rookie Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Steven Adams Thunder made to the playoff once again and lost first round which undermined the possibility for the team to obtain high lottery picks.

The following season marked Thunder's full reconstruction. Firstly they fired coach Donovan and replaced him with Mark Daigneault. Then they started to implement their decision on accumulating draft picks both first round and second round draft picks in order to find new talents and new cores for the team besides Gilgeous-Alexander from the Thunder-Clipper trade around Paul George. In this year they constantly sign players from their g league team—Oklahoma City Blue. In 2020-2021 regular season, 23 players in total played for the team and waived 8 players. Thus by trading and waiving players for as more draft picks as possible the roster for the team was extremely unstable that season, winning not 22 games out of 72. Since now Thunder has 19 first round draft picks in future five years till 2027 and 17 second round draft picks which secured a strong prosperity of the team while possessing adequate bargaining power for further trades. (For clarification, All trade information and game stats from basketball-reference.com)

3.3. Financial

Then from the perspective of financial account we can also indicate the pattern of development of the franchise.

In 2007-2008 season Seattle Supersonics was suffering from financial crisis and and deficit and since the team relocated to Oklahoma the revenue increased from 82 million US dollars to 111 million US dollars. In the following years the revenue gained from the franchise continued rising as stars were developed attracting numerous number of devoted fans. The second drastic surge happened in 2016-2017 season when Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook once again led the team into the western conference finals and achieved another peak in gate revenue and merchandising. Due to star effect the team still were gaining revenue due to Paul George Carmelo Anthony and Russell Westbrook and at that time they were still regarded as competitive with preseason odds at championship + 2150. The revenue finally reached a slump in 2020-2021 due to the philosophy of gaining draft picks and endeavored to get the worst result of the league and get highes possibility to win high picks.

Next let's disintegrate the revenue pattern of the franchise. From 2010 to 2021, the attendance, or gate revenue was relatively constant at around 50-60 million U.S dollars per year but gate revenue was occupying less and less proportion of the entire revenue of the team as the total team revenue keeps rising but gate revenue didn't have much fluctuation. The attendance ranking in the league was also pretty constant with highest ranking in 11th and lowest in 15th.

On the other hand the sales made by the team on jerseys was pretty decent and relatively higher than gate revenue. "Russell Westbrook and the Thunder are selling plenty of merchandising this season. In fact, Westbrook has the sixth most-popular jersey among all players and the team is seventh in team merchandising sales." [13].

Top 15 Most Popular NBA Jerseys:	Top 10 Most Popular Team Merchandise:
1. Stephen Curry, Golden State Warriors	1. Golden State Warriors
2. LeBron James, Cleveland Cavaliers	2. Cleveland Cavaliers
3. Kevin Durant, Golden State Warriors	3. Philadelphia 76ers
4. Giannis Antetokounmpo, Milwaukee Bucks	4. Los Angeles Lakers
5. Kyrie Irving, Boston Celtics	5. Boston Celtics
6. Russell Westbrook, Oklahoma City Thunder	6. Milwaukee Bucks
7. Kristaps Porzingis, New York Knicks	7. Oklahoma City Thunder
8. Joel Embiid, Philadelphia 76ers	8. New York Knicks
9. James Harden, Houston Rockets	9. Chicago Bulls
10. Ben Simmons, Philadelphia 76ers	10. Houston Rockets

Figure 1: The ranking of best selling NBA jerseys and team merchandising revenue in 2017-2018 season.

As we can see in the Figure 1, Russel Westbrook ranked number six in top jersey sells behind Stephen Curry, LeBron James, Kevin Durant Giannis Antetokounmpo, and Kyrie Irving. Considering the fact that Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving were traded to new teams which will stimulate more jersey sells, Russel Westbrook indeed helped the franchise to gain revenue in merchandising. The example here about Russell Westbrook's jersey sales is valid enough to illustrate the growth in revenue of OKC Thunder despite that the attendance and gate revenue is relatively stable. In the previous diagram showing team's total revenue we can indicate that the pinnacle was the 2018-2019 season, reaching 258 million dollars of revenue. And it was indeed that year both star players—Russell Westbrook and Paul George made it inside the top15 jersey sales across the league. "Westbrook placed seventh on the lest of best-selling jerseys with George finishing 13th in the NBA." [14]. This can be also shown in Figure 2 that Russell Westbrook and Paul George ranked 7 and 12 respectively in the rank of jersey sells and Oklahoma City Thunder became the only team to have two players on that list showing the great revenue gained from merchandising. Also that year the attendance of the arena was 746,323 ranked 15th out of 30 teams in NBA, showing the advantages brought by merchandising revenue.

(picture from ESPN)

Figure 2: The ranking of best selling NBA jerseys in 2018-2019 season.

4.   Conclusion

Today OKC Thunder ranked 25th in the league for its team value with 1.63 billion dollars calculated in October 2021 and from 2013 with the smallest market worth in 473 million dollars, OKC thunder was having a solid and steady increase in team value and revenue, and with numerous number of draft picks collected and loyal local fans' magnificent support. As a franchise with a short history Oklahoma City Thunder, the principles and philosophies in different phases are all reasonable and effective and it was indeed the organization's effort and decisions that helped the team to be able to be competitive and to be a constant championship for years.

The anticipation made from this work is crystal clear that Thunder will have a bright future and once again become a championship contender in the future regarding those draft picks and the ability for the scout and the team to excavate talents. This year, Thunder made three selections and traded for another rookie which significantly strengthened the team. The great performance brought by Chet Holmgren and the Australian rookie from last year—Josh Giddy guaranteed a bright future for the team.

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