

# 2022 WNBA Commissioner's Cup

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

Las Vegas Aces

A'ja Wilson

Kelsey Plum

Chelsea Gray

Postgame



season than you have in seasons past. You clearly look way more comfortable there, being productive, especially on the defensive end. Can you talk about how different it is in contrast to playing the 4 next to players from the past? How do you feel like the team is responding?

Las Vegas Aces 93, Chicago Sky 83

**Q. Chelsea, coming from the first game, the game that you had in Las Vegas, you really kind of matched the Sky, matched Kahleah Copper basket for basket in that third quarter in a way your team wasn't able to stop that run at that game at home. What were you looking for or how were you taking the game into your hands in that moment?**

CHELSEA GRAY: Well, I fouled her and gave her three and-ones, I believe. But just taking what the defense gave me, being smart offensively, not trying to force anything. But it was a team effort, even though I was matched up to her. It was a team effort defensively.

**Q. How much did you all draw on your last matchup, with them coming back from down 28, and ultimately not wanting that history to be repeated?**

A'JA WILSON: It was big. For myself, the first quarter when we were up, it was a situation where it was like, we've been here before and they're probably saying the same thing. So the biggest thing was coming out in the third and making sure that we just controlled the game in a sense on the defensive end. I think that's what was our focal point this whole week was defense, defense, defense.

It was in the back of my mind when we were in that situation before, up by a lot. But the biggest thing was just when they go on their runs, containing that because they're a really, really good team. We can't take that away from Chicago. They played us through and through, gave us a run for our money. But we just had to stay composed and patient when they would go on their runs.

**Q. A'ja, you've spent way more time playing the 5 this**

A'JA WILSON: Yeah, I'm undersized at the 5 honestly. Our league is strong. They're big. So I just try to find ways to make sure my teammates know that I'm there, try to be the anchor of the defense. I mean, I let my player get some easy points. I can't have that, because my guards are trying their best to keep people in front.

When it comes to playing the 5 or when it comes to playing any position, I just try to stick to my assignment and make sure my teammates know I'm there no matter what. Just trying to hold it down the best I can because it's hard. This league is really good. We have great players. So at the end of the day, whatever position I'm in, I just make sure that I can be productive in it.

**Q. A'ja, you had mentioned the defense. Obviously there has been a lot of talk lately about how the defense has been on the decline for Vegas. What does it mean for you to be able to come out and win this way and seemingly prove all those doubters wrong in this fashion -- and you with six blocks, by the way?**

A'JA WILSON: Yeah, I knew our defense stunk, but I didn't think it was on the decline.

No, but it's a mindset. It's a heart decision. Defense doesn't take a lot. You don't have to be necessarily talented to play defense. You just have to want it.

At the end of the day, I'm going to make sure my teammates know, like I said, that I'm there and we buckle in. When we are locked in on the defensive end, like I was telling KP, this doesn't have to be just a Commissioner's Cup game. This could be an every-game thing for us. But it's just a shift of the mindset. So hopefully going into this long road trip that we have ahead that we can stay and maintain that mindset.



**Q. Kelsey, what was working for you so well in that first quarter?**

KELSEY PLUM: I feel like I just felt really open.

CHELSEA GRAY: That girl was shooting like an All-Star.

KELSEY PLUM: I just felt really open. We were moving the ball really well and I just happened to be the beneficiary of a lot of wide-open looks. I came into the game telling myself to be really patient and just let it come, but it came really early.

CHELSEA GRAY: She was bringing two, giving it off and then in the rotations we were just able to find her. She was able to knock it down. She did a great job coming off screens, handling it well, dishing and then it came right back to her.

I was proud of the way she just started the game, not even knocking down shots but super composed. So yeah, she was knocking down shots.

KELSEY PLUM: We'll work on the third quarter.

**Q. Last time you guys were in Chicago, Becky said you missed Chelsea. How nice was it to see her get some recognition on a national stage like tonight?**

KELSEY PLUM: Yeah, I just want to for the record, set it straight: She's the best point guard in the world. She's starting point guard on the Olympic team. She's an All-Star, All-WNBA player. She's the clutch player in the WNBA. Ask anyone, ask any GM, head coach, player --

A'JA WILSON: I'm glad she's playing for us.

KELSEY PLUM: Hell, yeah. She got snubbed this year. It just sucks because I felt like we deserved five All-Stars, and I know that's not easy. She's a competitor and she leads our team, and when we need plays down the stretch, Chelsea consistently makes big plays. At the end of the day, you can talk about the numbers and this and that, but she wins games, and that to me should be the most important thing.

That's the MVP tonight, but she has been leading our team the whole season. I feel like, to be honest, she doesn't get the love and credit she deserves, and I'm really, really glad that people saw that tonight.

**Q. A'ja, clearly you were on tonight, both sides of the ball. According to Across the Timeline, you had an unprecedented stat line for WNBA history. Obviously there were a number of motivating factors here, but I**

**wonder what having your college coach on the sideline meant for you.**

A'JA WILSON: I mean, that's my girl. That's my girl, 100 percent. It's always good when I see Coach Staley. She's someone that pushes me to my limits, no matter what, and I greatly appreciate her being there. I felt like if she wasn't here, she would still be texting me at halftime no matter what. At the end of the day, I'm glad to have her in person.

But yeah, it's always fun to win in front of Coach Staley.

**Q. I'm wondering for all three of you if you have any big plans to spend the money on something in particular, what you're planning to do with it?**

CHELSEA GRAY: Man, not me yet.

A'JA WILSON: Yeah, I don't know just yet.

CHELSEA GRAY: She going to buy me a bag, though.

A'JA WILSON: Now that I have the media's attention, I don't understand why my teammates think I'm going to buy them things. Who said that? We all got the equal share amount, so I don't understand why people are coming for me and my bonus. But I wish them the best, God bless.

**Q. A'ja, just wanted to get your perspective as far as just the season that you are having and just like an MVP-type season. What do you feel like has really contributed to your success and acceleration as far as your game is concerned?**

A'JA WILSON: I mean, I'm just doing what I'm paid to do. At the end of the day, I love hooping. I love doing this with my teammates. This is nothing different. I just try to give it my all. Not even trying to toot my own horn, but I busted my ass this offseason to make sure that I was in shape and ready for my teammates, to make sure I can produce for them. At the end of the day, that's what it is. I don't really know what kind of caliber season this is for me, and at the end of the day, I couldn't care less. I'm just going to try to go out there and play hard for my teammates for 40 minutes.

**Q. How much does a win like this help boost your confidence as far as being able to finish out games, especially when that was a challenge at some point in the season?**

A'JA WILSON: I mean, it's a good win, but at the same time this is just the beginning. I feel like the real season is just now starting for us. This is nice. We're going to enjoy it for 24 hours. But we've got a bus trip to go to Indiana,

and we've got to turn the page and lock in for them.

This is beautiful, it's cute, yes, we won, ooh, but this is just the beginning. We're going to take it in, but we're not done. We know what's ahead of us, and we've just got to make sure that we take care of business the right way.

**Q. Kelsey, after the game, they gave you like a little trophy afterward. Why do they keep doing you?**

KELSEY PLUM: They're playing with me, dog. Cathy thought she got jokes in her bag.

A'JA WILSON: It was funny.

KELSEY PLUM: It was funny. Honestly, when she handed me the box and I opened it, I was thinking it was going to be a significant trophy. Then it was smaller than the original one, which was already like microscopic. She said the other one is on back order, which is just --

CHELSEA GRAY: Shipping and handling.

KELSEY PLUM: That's funny, Cathy.

**Q. Chelsea, when you were announced as MVP and your teammates kind of all piled on on you, what was that moment like for you? It seemed like you were a little bit in disbelief maybe that it was you.**

CHELSEA GRAY: That was an amazing feeling. It's been a hard couple of weeks for me. I lost somebody close to me. It's been a hard couple weeks. My teammates have been there for me along the whole journey. Constantly checking in. I've had basketball and I've had them, I've had my family to lean on. My wife has been amazing with helping me these last few weeks.

There's a lot of emotion coming to a head. But these teammates, they're my dogs, man. They have my back, and I wouldn't be holding that MVP trophy without them.

It could have gone to so many different people. Everybody was locked in and played great today. So I'm definitely blessed to be able to hold it up.

**Q. Kelsey, some would call this season like a breakout season that you're having. Tonight you were spectacular. What did you see in the defense tonight that allowed you to be so effective?**

KELSEY PLUM: If I would have made a layup, my life would have been a lot easier. I just was Smokey the Bear today. But hey, can't have everything, you know?

I would say, to be honest, I'm not really playing much different than I played last year, but now I'm not coming off the bench and I play 10 more minutes a game. If you really just add the production from the minutes played last year to what I've been doing this year, it's very similar. To be honest, I don't really think I'm doing that much different, but I mean, y'all can call it what it is. I personally know that at the end of the day I'm focused on this team and winning. If we've seen in this league, there are stats stuffers and there are people that win games, and I don't want to be a stat stuffer. I want to win games. We look at people differently when you do that.

I think that's really my biggest focus is trying to figure out how I can impact the game so we can win.

**Q. Kelsey and Chelsea, 43 points, 11 assists between the two of you. What was the focus tonight in helping lead the Aces to this particular win?**

CHELSEA GRAY: Just taking what the defense gives us. I think starting off, Kelsey started off for us offensively and defensively. We were engaged, on point. At the point of attack she was getting rid of it, coming back to it. She let the game come to her, and she was knocking it down. They left her open three, four times, and you can't do that when your name is Kelsey Plum.

She was just locked in. And then for me, just taking what the defense gave me more so in the second half. They were showing different looks, especially on pick-and-roll. They were switching, they were hard hedging. At the end of the day, we just wanted it. I think that's what you were able to see out there offensively and defensively.

Super proud of KP and how she came out, and she didn't let up. She didn't let up. That's why we're holding the trophy.

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