

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Corey Kispert

Media Conference



COREY KISPERT: I think our commitment to play the right way was probably the most different thing. There were a lot of games in the first half of the year where we'd get down in the first half and kind of quit and roll over. But we had a lot more fight in our team. Since these NBA games are so long and there's so many possessions, you're never truly out of it until that buzzer sounds.

I expect us to fall into a lot more wins this year because of how we play for the entirety of the game and kind of our commitment to playing the right way no matter what the core is or how much time is on the clock is going to help us out a lot this year.

Q. Was there a game late last season that you felt like if it happened in the first 15 games of the year, you guys would have rolled over like you were talking about?

COREY KISPERT: Man, that was a long time ago. Not that I can remember now. Specifically I just remember that kind of collective feeling in the locker room. Or even like if we got blitzed with a 10-0 run in the second half, that would kind of kill us in the first half of the season. We just don't have that anymore.

Q. You're in the midst of trying to get a contract extension. What's that process been like?

COREY KISPERT: Honestly, it's been really fun. It's a big decision, and it's like a big part of anybody's career, that first kind of introduction to the business side of basketball. But I kind of have craved that part of the game for a while now, and you kind of -- as a rookie, on your rookie deal, you just play and you hope to play your best and let the rest take care of itself. Now I'm fully in it, and it's been fun to get that side of what the business part of basketball has been like.

Q. You're a vet in the game now. What kind of leadership qualities are you trying to build upon or what are you looking forward to as a leader going forward?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, I have a lot of, like, leadership qualities that I've had for a while and have kind of been engrained in me since I was a kid, but I felt like kind of an imposter on this team trying to lead in the first couple years of my career, had all these great or want to lead or want to hold people accountable but people look at you funny when you're in your first year, second year, and you're trying to tell older guys what to do, grown men what to do.

But now actually being a tenured Wizard compared to a lot of other guys in this locker room, I feel like I have a lot more leeway to actually make my voice count, and I expect to really make some big steps leadership-wise, just as I'm trying to make steps on the court with my game.

Q. Speaking of steps on the court, we all saw how you improved last year. In what areas do you hope to make significant gains this year?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, I mean, like continue to double and triple and quadruple down on my strengths and the reasons why I'm here. I want to shoot it really consistently from the outside. I want to be a threat from deep. I want to maintain the finishing numbers I had last year, to kind of be that two-level threat that you just can't run Corey off the line and forget about it. I want to be somebody that makes teams really, like, second and third -- second-guess about how they're trying to guard me and the plan they want to put into place.

But the thing I worked on the most this summer is playing with and craving contact. I'm a lot bigger and stronger than I think I am, and kind of growing into that ability to play to my strength, literally, is going to open up the world for me on the court.

Q. We know you guys want to improve defensively to bring in a rim protector like Alex Sarr, rebounder like Valanciunas, the size that Brogdon brings to the perimeter, the new pieces, how can they help you defensively?

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COREY KISPERT: Yeah, they're going to help us a ton. Two out of those three guys have played in playoff environments, really big games and know the game inside and out, and that kind of experience and leadership that they bring is going to help us a ton on defense. We're going to tweak some things defensively. We're going to have a different plan in place. It's going to make it really easy on us to guard other teams really well, but having that security blanket both on the perimeter with Malcolm and inside with Jonas and Alex gives us guards confidence to pressure the ball and put a lot of stress on other teams' ball handlers. It's that kind of relationship between the guards and the bigs that make for a really good defense.

Yeah, it's something we want to get better at for sure, and I think BK has got a really good defensive history and background, as well, and he's going to put a good plan in place to help us succeed.

Q. Last year with the new front office trying to do a lot of things to kind of level up, how are they continuing that this off-season?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, I walked into the practice facility my first day about three weeks ago and we had a brand new locker room, so that's one. A lot of it is visual. They've told us that they want us to feel comfortable and feel at home walking into work. When you can leave your home and feel like you're going to a second home, when you go to the place that you work, that's going to make players -- make us feel more comfortable, help us feel better in our own skin, and ultimately perform better.

In the first year and kind of through the first summer, a lot of it is visual, kind of making the place feel better and look better and having us be more comfortable, and then we hired a bunch of people over the summer that I've just gotten to know, and they're doing an amazing job. They're the best at what they do, and they're going to make our lives easier as players, again, in an effort to help us perform our best.

All good marks on my report card for how they're leveling up, but so far, so good.

Q. As a veteran of the team now, a long tenured Wizard --

COREY KISPERT: Not old but tenured.

Q. What are you doing specifically as a vet to try to ingratiate the young players into the game and try to get them more prepared for their first steps in the NBA?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, the one thing that I remember about being a rookie or being a second-year player in the league, it sounds funny, but little things like remembering everybody's name or the route you take to get home from the gym or making sure you're on time to places. That was a huge stressor for me. I wanted to be on time. I wanted to be in the right place. I wanted to make sure I was doing the right thing.

That little stuff of being an adult and showing up on time is a big learning curve for a lot of guys who are coming from college or other professional leagues. Little stuff like that helped me when I was a rookie, and I hope to pay that forward to get these guys as comfortable as possible.

They're already amazing people and they work hard, so they have that going for them. But I want to be able to make sure that when the season gets going and we get in the grind of things that they feel like they can be themselves, and that's the most important thing.

Q. With the pace of play being what it was last year, how will that be different this year with the variation of initiators that are available this season?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, we've got a lot of different options. The things we're trying to do so far on offense is allowing us to play through those initiators and play through the guys that can put the rest of us in really, really good spots. We're going to, again, play really, really fast. I think that plays to our advantage a lot with the kind of athletes we have and the kind of shape that guys shows up in, and that's what I like. I like playing fast, like getting up and down, like running the floor.

I think you need to expect a high-tempo offense from us and really smart play makers with the ball, putting us in good places to succeed.

Q. Building off of that, I asked Coach Keefe about Malcolm Brogdon's ability to drive and kick. What can that do for you specifically as a shooter who's so good at catch and shoots?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, he and I have had a lot of conversations already about how he wants to -- he says the word "unlock" me and use my skill set to better the team and better our offense. Malcolm pretty much owns the paint as a guard, and he can kind of get touches in there whenever he really wants to, and that's what he's built his career off of. Not only that, he's really cerebral and really smart, too. So he can do the really hard task of getting into the paint but also making plays for others.

I've already seen the success that that brings for my



three-point makes -- my three-point makes and his assist numbers. I hope to continue to work with him on that to see how he plays. It's all learning curve. It's all chemistry. That just comes with reps and conversations. I hope to just continue to talk with Malcolm about that and see how he plays and play off of him the best way I can to make him successful and make me successful.

Q. You talked about the offense and the pace of play, but you also talked about building yourself over the off-season. Last season you talked about the challenge for yourself defensively and you took that leap. We all saw it. What does that look like now, that next step defensively for you especially knowing that that's an area BK is going to hold the whole team available?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, we love as players, even though sometimes coaches -- any player can tell you that a coach will get on your nerves every now and again, but BK's consistency and his accountability is something that deep down we truly crave. I want that. Everybody on this team wants that. It's different for each player.

So my level -- the things that he holds me accountable on, one of them is defense. The physicality that I brought up earlier, craving contact works on both sides of the ball, and I can use my physicality and frame to guide guys where I want them to go. That was a big focus for me this summer, too, on both sides of the ball. Thankfully I believe that I have the physical ability to guard anybody on the floor, and it's putting myself in the right positions early and using my physical strengths to make myself a successful defender.

It's going to take some games to actually see that implemented, but so far, it's been really, really positive, and I hope to be an impact defender for this team this year rather than somebody in the past who has tried to get by. I want to make that big leap into being somebody that we can rely on on both sides of the ball.

Q. With the strength that you gained over the summer, is it something that you changed with your diet? Obviously weightlifting is a component of that. Is it something you tweaked in your workouts to allow yourself to get even stronger than you have been over the course of your career or is it maintaining what you've been doing?

COREY KISPERT: No, it's maintaining -- in the weight room it's maintaining what I've been doing. I'm plenty strong enough already to do the things I want to do physically on the court, but it's like just trying stuff out defensively. Playing a lot of live reps in the summer and pickup being really intentional about how I play defense

and not being afraid to screw up, mess up, and go back to the drawing board over and over again. This summer has been in its entirety, no matter what I worked on, was like details and tightening the screws on stuff. I didn't really feel like I had to completely overhaul or add a completely new skill in the summer. It was truly just dialing in the things that I already had and kind of making it work for me.

As you get further and further in your career, you start to reinvent yourself less and less, and you just kind of get really good at the small stuff. That was how I approached the summer on both sides of the ball. It's just throwing a lot of things at the wall, seeing what sticks, and really kind of tightening the screws on stuff that you like.

Q. In what ways, if any, does Jordan Poole seem different to 12 months ago?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, you can just tell his blood pressure is a lot lower. I couldn't imagine the kind of stuff he was dealing with his first year here. Coming to a brand new team to a place he'd never been before and you're asked to do like a host of different things that maybe he didn't have that role or that responsibility with the Warriors. It felt like he was juggling a lot of different stuff. This year he just feels comfortable. He feels calm. He feels secure in who he is and the kind of player he wants to be for us. He's had a year to kick the tires on his role on this team.

It feels like to me that he's coming in to be more of a leader and he's coming into this year feeling super secure in who he is and the kind of player he is. I've been really impressed with the progress he's made there and the strides he's taken in that part of his game. We all know the stuff he can do on the court. He's a super talented and skilled player, and it's all the rest that's taken huge jumps.

Q. Just seems after years and years of asking people about possible contract extensions and free agency, all that stuff, that it creates a lot of stress. I'm sure all of us here can understand why. Why for you, in addition to it being your first contract negotiation, actually makes it fun?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, well, something I actually saw this summer that really put my mind at ease about it, it was something that was obviously hanging over my head the entire summer, and they asked -- it was a preseason press conference with the Bills and they asked Josh Allen about it point blank, you're now kind of middle of the road as far as quarterbacks go pay-wise in the NFL and you see all these other guys earning crazy contracts, and does that bother you because you continue to play at a really high level, and he immediately answered no, and he kind of gave the mindset or gave the way he thinks about it as like,

everybody has their day. Everybody has their day in the NFL and the NBA and whatever sport you play; why wouldn't you want everybody else to have theirs, as well. That's kind of the way that I look at it now is like, whether it's now, whether it's next season or whatever future contracts come up, for me, I'll have my day, I'll move on, I'll be able to take care of my family, I'll be able to play the sport I love for a living, and from there on out, your life kind of returns to normal afterwards.

Whatever I sign for or wherever my career takes me, my life is not going to look much different. My lifestyle is going to stay the same. I'm pretty happy and secure in who I am and how my family is. So the stress that comes with the contract just feels a little lighter when you enter into the talks that way.

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