

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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AJ Johnson

Media Conference



Cavaliers - 134, Wizards - 124

Q. AJ, hello. First of all, welcome to D.C. What was your reaction to the news you got traded here?

AJ JOHNSON: I was kind of shocked. I didn't really have too much of a crazy reaction. I was just a little shocked.

Q. What can you tell Wizards fans about what you bring to an organization?

AJ JOHNSON: I would just say like excitement. I'm going to go out there and give it my all every single night, yeah.

Q. Can you take us through that dunk that you had tonight?

AJ JOHNSON: I just ripped baseline and just got up. I should have dunked the first try I got for a layup. I'm definitely trying to be in the mindset to just dunk everything when I'm going to the rim.

Q. As Wizards fans get to know you better, how would you describe your basketball journey to this point?

AJ JOHNSON: I would say it's like a roller coaster. I've been to a lot of places. I left home early, like 15 years old to go pursue my dreams and get exposure and stuff like that.

I would just say it's like a roller coaster, but I'm excited to be here.

Q. JP was telling us you guys workout at the same place in the off-season. What kind of prior relationships do you have with anyone in the organization?

AJ JOHNSON: Also, JP, I seen him a lot during the workouts and practice this summer. Bub Carrington, all the rookies, I'm super close with them. That's definitely a plus having those guys. All of them, Khris, everybody really.

Q. You mentioned the young guys. What's it like kind of joining the youth movement here and being part of kind of a large group of rookies from your class?

AJ JOHNSON: I think it's a great opportunity because we're all still trying to find ourselves in this game and stuff like that. So we can help each other and continue to grow together and push each other. I'm really excited.

Q. Having already played with Khris Middleton, what can you tell people in D.C. about what he brings to an organization both in the locker room and on the floor?

AJ JOHNSON: Leadership skills definitely. He's played at the highest level of basketball, gotten championships and stuff like that. Of course a great basketball player, but yeah.

Q. I'm sure they've told you this, but the Wizards really wanted you. You were one of the big selling points. What does it mean to you to hear that you were valued so highly by them?

AJ JOHNSON: It's a great feeling knowing that I'm somewhere that wants me, or they wanted me at first, but they ended up getting me now. It's definitely a great feeling being somewhere that I'm wanted and looked at as valuable.

So I just want to work super hard and become everything I want to become in this game.

Q. For those of us who are just beginning to learn you and your story, how did you wind up in Australia? And what was it like to be still in your teens half a world away from home?

AJ JOHNSON: Originally I was committed to Texas my senior year, and I chose to decommit and go to Australia. It was mostly like a self-decision, like I wanted to go play professional. I felt like it would help me be a better NBA player. I was hoping to go to the NBA that next year. I just thought it would get me ready and stuff like that.

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It was definitely a journey. I was out there ten months by myself. I had one of my brothers with me. I felt like it was a good development moment for me, like mentally, physically, in all areas of the game. I got a lot better there. It was definitely a journey. It was fun.

Q. What interactions, if any, did you have with the Wizards before the draft?

AJ JOHNSON: Yeah, I talked to them during the combine. I talked to them during the combine, the meeting. The G-League head coach, he was recruiting me at LSU. He was at LSU, so I was thinking about going to LSU. I'm really close with him too, the G-League head coach.

Q. What stood out to you about them from that conversation at the combine?

AJ JOHNSON: It just seemed they were really interested in me and high on me and had a lot of belief in me. They seemed really cool and genuine.

Q. You said the trade came as a bit of a surprise. It's not often players are traded in their rookie years. What's the last 48 hours been like for you?

AJ JOHNSON: It's been a whirlwind. It's been super fast. I'm just trying to take everything in at one time, but yeah.

Q. How has the team helped you get settled in?

AJ JOHNSON: They're doing great honestly. They're all kind of like my age and stuff like that. I know a lot of them. They're doing really good just making me feel welcome and stuff like that.

Q. How do you feel like being in this situation, we talked about the youth, will help with your development? Especially since that's a huge focus of this organization with the young players that they have.

AJ JOHNSON: Like how do I feel about it?

Q. How do you think it will help with your development?

AJ JOHNSON: I think it's going to be really good for my development because the amount of opportunities out there that I can get on the court and get those game live reps and also having like other rookies that are trying to do the same thing, find their niche and stuff in the league.

I feel like it's a great opportunity for me to develop into the

player I'm trying to be.

Q. Your team in Australia last year played against Alex's team. What did you notice from him in that game, just being in the same league? I'm not sure if you played in the game that the Wizards played against the Bucks earlier in the season, but what did you notice about Alex on that team?

AJ JOHNSON: Like then and now kind of thing? He's gotten way better since then. He was already super good to me when he was there, but he's definitely made good improvements and stuff like that since he's gone to the NBA, the whole predraft process and all that.

Q. Which of the Wizards rookies did you kind of know during the predraft process?

AJ JOHNSON: Bub -- yeah, all three of them. I knew all of them. We were close, hanging out at the predraft, all of that. The predraft, combine, all of that. I'm already locked in with them.

Q. Keefe was talking about how you are still getting adjusted to the schemes and everything, and he just kind of threw you out there. How did you feel the first impression went?

AJ JOHNSON: I was excited. I was kind of antsy to come in at first, but I was really excited to go out there and play. I haven't gotten too many game live reps in the NBA, so I'm still getting all the way used to it and stuff. I definitely had fun.

Q. It seemed like Coach Vanterpool was working with you a lot before the game and during the game. What have you noticed about him, and how has he helped you so far?

AJ JOHNSON: I feel like he's a really good coach. He instills a lot of confidence in his players and stuff like that to go out there and play. Make sure they're playing hard and stuff like that. He wants us to compete and stuff like that. I think he's a really good coach.

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