

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Jordan Poole

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Pacers 134, Wizards 130 (OT)

Q. What is your main takeaway off of this game in terms of what you guys showed and what you guys can improve on?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, I think we played a good game. I think we played hard. We were competitive. We did a ton of things right. Sometimes the ball doesn't bounce your way. Really hard-fought game by Indiana, cutting the lead, just finding ways to execute down the stretch. We got some looks that we wanted, they just didn't fall. Would have been good to have, but we definitely got better. There's some stuff from that -- a lot of the stuff that we worked on situational-wise, we got to pretty flawlessly, it was just a matter of make or miss. Yeah, just a hard-fought, competitive game.

Q. What were some of the situational things you thought you guys did well in particular?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, the last couple minutes of regulation we got to the plays we wanted to. Some plays were drew up out of a time-out but some were also through the flow, and those are things that we work on in practice when we don't have time-outs or if we don't want to burn a time-out or if it has to be situational. We executed those pretty well tonight. Some shots we made, some shots we didn't, but I think our time and scoring was pretty solid. The ball just didn't bounce our way.

Q. Corey said he's really pleased with how competitive you guys have been recently. How would you describe the way things have improved recently?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, I think we've been good. I think we've been battling. I think post deadline, obviously we have a little bit of a different rotation, a group of different guys. I think we've been playing hard and finding ways to stay connected as a unit, competitive. Our style is we play pretty fast. Everybody is stepping up. Everybody is having an opportunity to use their abilities, and I think we're playing really good team ball.

I think guys are excited to see other guys do good, whether that's making shots, whether that's an extra pass, whether that's coming over to cover for somebody on a blown coverage. Just overall we feel pretty good, pretty confident as a team. We're still young. We're still learning. It's pretty cool to be in those situations so that we understand and have the experience so next time we feel a little bit more comfortable.

Q. How about the way Kyshawn has played lately?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, Kyshawn has played extremely good. Offensively he's aggressive and he's knocking shots down. I think we all saw how capable and the potential he had earlier on in the season when he came to the shots he was shooting, but he's shooting the same shots and he's knocking them down, and it's opened up the floor for him.

But I think a lot of things that people don't realize is how good of a play maker and passing he is, how he gets off the ball, how he gets other guys involved. He's using his size, and he's really competing on defense. He's a really good defender. I've just got to tell him sometimes -- he's a rookie so the calls won't always go his way, but he's establishing himself as a physical defender in year one, so when the Playoffs come or year two comes or year three comes, similar to like a Gary Payton or Davion Mitchell or guys -- Keegan Murray or guys that are long and athletic that are really good defenders but they're able to get away with a lot of fouls because that's their style of defense -- it's frustrating a little bit more him right now just because he's not getting the calls going his way, but he's doing everything right, he's playing physical, he's making it tough on the other teams' better players and better opponents.

He was going up against Pascal tonight, who's an All-Star, which is a tough matchup, but he did a great job. He just has to continue playing that way, and over the course of a year, over the course of his career, he'll be labeled as a physical defender you can't call those fouls on. I think he's been doing a really good job.

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Q. You're saying he's increasing what the baseline for him looks like?

JORDAN POOLE: Well, I feel like, for example, it's a lot of defenders that I get to go against night in and night out that are just extremely aggressive defenders and they get away with a lot of stuff just because of their resume and the way that they've -- prime example, Nickeil Alexander-Walker is a really good defender, and earlier on in his career he would get called for a lot of touch fouls. Sometimes he fouls, but once you play in the Playoffs, once you play some high-level basketball, you're playing against high-level teams, the refs and I think the rest of the league and teams and opponents know that that's just how he plays, and after a while you can't call those anymore. It may be tough right now, but he's doing something that's pretty special to help him along the line.

Q. How do you sum up your first 53 games of this season, how you've played?

JORDAN POOLE: I feel like I've been solid. I feel like I've been all right. Just trying to keep this team and this unit connected, and I think something that's really special is we just really care about each other in the locker room. We want to see each other succeed. It's a youthful energy here, which is pretty cool to be a part of because you enjoy playing basketball with those guys out there and seeing how passionate they are. Seeing them grow in real time is also just super dope, and we just have a really good unit.

A lot of guys are going to All-Star Weekend, which is really cool, especially for our organization, and we're building something special right now. We're building something special. I think everybody is seeing that. I think the young guys are starting to feel it, as well. The coaches are doing a really good job of coaching us, but just being one of the leaders of the team, just continuing to not be satisfied, continuing to keep getting better, keep being aggressive, keep finding ways to just level us up because in this society of here, now, I want it now, it's all about delayed gratification. In a couple years, if not next year, those jumps happen pretty fast. Those are the things we're looking for, and we're really excited about that.

Q. What does it do for your confidence to have some of these huge scoring games, especially when you think about how you've grown since you've gotten to the league over time?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, I feel pretty comfortable. I think a lot of it is just my role. I talked about it earlier in the season, before the season, Coach BK has put me in a position to be aggressive, to go score, to get out in transition, but also to get my guys involved. I'm seeing a

lot of different coverages. I'm getting a lot of pressure, a lot of double-teams, a lot of hard hedges throughout the course of the game, but it's also making my teammates better because I'm trying to put them in positions to be successful, and I think with the way that we're playing right now and the style of play that we have, it's really hard to focus and pinpoint on one particular person just because the ball moves so much and everybody is involved. We're just trying to find the best possible shot, and Coach is giving me the green light to be aggressive.

I've always been a team-first player, so anything I can do to help us gain a slight advantage, whether it's on the offensive side or trying to get somebody a good look is something that I feel confident in, and I feel like I'm extremely hard to stop out there. That's why they've got to send two to three people at me pretty consistently. I'm just trying to be aggressive, and once shots start going in and we start getting some easy shots, it really helps our team, and I just try to build confidence in these other guys, as well.

Q. How much are you enjoying this kind of elder statesman, veteran role that you're embracing?

JORDAN POOLE: It's really dope. It's really cool. I've always been sort of in a leadership role just throughout the course of my year, even though I was one of the younger players on the team, whether it's high school, whether it's AAU, whether it's college. I didn't talk all the time when it came to huddles, but whenever I did say something, my team would listen and kind of just respect my voice. So it was pretty natural.

But what really helps is the group that we have. They're just willing to learn and willing to listen and willing to get better. That's just a huge quality to have within a locker room, especially when guys are so young, and just now experiencing the league for their first time, it's really cool, just because I feel like I'll lead in the proper way just by being authentic, building confidence to my guys, wanting to play the right way, enjoying the little things. It's always something that you want growing up, especially being a high-level basketball player. It's really dope and it's really cool, but credit to my teammates and the organization for putting me into that role and just allowing me to be myself.

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