

Washington Wizards Media Conference

Monday, April 14, 2025

Washington, DC, USA

Marcus Smart

Media Conference



Q. Marcus, talked to Khris. Similar player. To you, is defense something that can be taught, or is it a mentality?

MARCUS SMART: It definitely can be taught, but you do have to have a different type of mentality to play defense, especially in the league where offense is more predicated, that's the source. Offensive players get away with a lot more.

You definitely got to have a mentality to play defense. It's not easy. Nobody really wants to play defense. You got to be in an awkward position for a long period of time. You are at a disadvantage. You don't know anything the offensive players are going to do. They have all the advantage.

Yeah, it can be tough. But a lot of it is the mentality you have to bring to it.

Q. You've been a part of many locker rooms. What makes this locker room so special? What about the balance as far as having the young guys and the vets?

MARCUS SMART: Definitely, this locker room is special because all year before I even got here these guys have been put in adversity, put through the fire early. Then when I get here, we're still in the water, still in the fire.

But not once, not one day, not one moment did you hear guys complain. That's what made this group special. Then to bring me, Khris in as vets, to be a part of it, they just welcomed us in with open arms. They gave us ears to listen.

As a vet that's still trying to make an impact and show what you can do, to have the young guys treat you like that while they're competing, trying to get better, trying to show who they are, just shows how special this group really is.

Q. What did you learn about Brian Keefe?

MARCUS SMART: That he talks a lot more than he lets off

(laughter).

No, BK is great, man. He understands his players. He understands when to give the balance, when to be a coach, when to be a friend. Just want to be a human being. We're all humans. We go through things personally in our lives off the court, on the court. He does a good job of regulating that, helping guys feel safe, willing to come out here and want to work.

Q. What are your impressions of Bub and Kyshawn?

MARCUS SMART: I love Bub and Ky. Those guys are great. Obviously they're young. The fire that they have. Every time they step on that court, you know they're going to come out and they're going to bring it. They're not going to back down from anybody.

That's what you need as a young player, especially in this league. Guys are going to test you, to see where your heart is at. Those two guys let it be known where it's at.

Q. A lot has been made of winning habits here. As a guy that made it to two Finals, how does this team compare to very successful teams in your experience?

MARCUS SMART: They're right there. They just need more experience. That comes with time. We all have to go through it. But like I said from day one, just hearing the guys, what I've known, what I've seen from them, being able to be here and experience it with them, the resiliency that they have.

I think that was shown all the way until last night's game. We fought till the end. These guys continue to fight no matter the record, no matter the outcome, they gave it everything they have.

That's key and that's big to be a good team, to be a developing team. You got to have those moments. This team has that.

Q. What are your off-season plans? Are you going to

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

be in DC or elsewhere? How will you as a vet continue to teach the young players through the summer months?

MARCUS SMART: Most likely be in Phoenix. But will be in DC here and there.

Just trying to get these guys in the gym, figure out what works for them, what are they doing in their off-season, some things I can help them with, whatever that may be. Just being there. We all got our own lives outside of basketball. When the season is over, everybody does their own thing. Trying to keep that camaraderie together, keeping in touch, working out together, finding out what guys are doing, trying to spend more time off the court.

Q. What's the biggest thing about how you've structured your off-seasons that's changed since early in your career?

MARCUS SMART: For me, these last two years is the first two years of my career not being in the Playoffs. That right there structurally has changed from my beginning years for me.

I know after going straight to working out right away as hard as I usually would coming out of the Playoffs, I could let my body rest and get 100% healthy, not have to worry about nicks and knacks going into the next season. I think that's probably the biggest structural change for me in my off-season workouts.

Q. What are the biggest impressions you had with the Wizards before joining the organization and how did they compare to reality?

MARCUS SMART: I guess looking outside, what we see, everybody comes in, you see the record, then you go this is a night for probably me to have a career night or get off, probably not to put too much into it. That's what used to be the impression.

With being here, seeing the work these guys put in, being on the court and fighting with those guys, that definitely has changed. Teams are coming in now, and understanding it's not going to be as easy as we thought, we probably are going to have to fight, we're going to go to sleep tonight. We can't be out all night.

That's all you're looking for, looking for those guys to turn a leaf. They're starting to do it. It starts now. It starts this summer. It starts with putting in the work to get better so you can come back with that mentality.

Q. You were active but didn't play for the last five

games of the season. How did the organization communicate that decision to you? How did you feel about it?

MARCUS SMART: I came here to play. That's what I was going to do. But obviously at the same time they wanted to see what some of these young guys can do.

I've been doing this a long time. I understand that because at the end of the day the young guys is going to help this team to grow and get better, get where we want to be.

We kind of have to speed 'em up and see what they can do early. That was it. They were very transparent about it. I was always ready. There was always a chance, just in case. Right now we want to see what these young guys can get. Your playing time may decrease or you may not play certain games, but constantly be ready.

Q. What did you see from Alex as a defender?

MARCUS SMART: One, I talked to Alex plenty of times. He knows this. His mentality. We're working on that. That's something we're working on. Once he fully embraces who he is, his height, athleticism, how special he can be when he puts his mind to it. He can be a great defender. That's what we're working on, getting that consistency from him on that end.

When he's locked in and he's turned on, he's a valuable defender.

Q. Are you referring to confidence or on-court meanness?

MARCUS SMART: Yeah, a little bit of everything. He's a young guy. He's asked a lot on both ends. That's going to be scary coming in, especially at the position he plays where it's very physical. He's not a physical guy. That's something he has to work on understanding, but also understanding what he is good at talent-wise, use that to his advantage.

I think he's learning that a little bit more. But we got to get more of it.

Q. Be a little bit of a dog?

MARCUS SMART: There you go. The rest will work out itself (laughter).

Q. You could provide so much institutional knowledge to these young guys and have that be a key role while you're still playing on the court. You also have played at the highest level. Competing for championships is



important. How do you weigh those two things in terms of what you want to do now?

MARCUS SMART: That's kind of been the question for me. All I can say to that is I can only control what I can control. I thank God every day for giving me the opportunity to come out here and do what I love to do, get paid to do it, take care of my family.

With that being said, you got to trust God's will. Everything He does is for a reason. I honestly think I was put here for a reason. Don't know what that reason is, but I know it's a reason.

With that being said, it allows me to navigate that question and understand that I don't know what that means for me in the future; but what I do know is wherever I land, wherever I may be, wherever God has me be, it's going to be the best for me.

Q. Mentality is one of the key points when it comes to defense. Alex has a good mentality. How is it with the rest of the rookies? Do you see among them that can become great defenders in the years to come?

MARCUS SMART: Yeah, I mean, for sure. As a young guy, it's kind of like being the youngest sibling. I'm the youngest of four boys. My mentality comes from a whole different place. It was built early on for me.

Yeah, that's it. Having that mentality as a young guy, everybody is going to pick on you, shoo you away. You have to do everything you can to make sure you're being heard. The way you do that is coming out and letting everybody know you're not going to back down.

These rookies have been showing that. I love Bilal. I love Ky and Alex and those guys, the way that they've been showing it. Obviously they got hurt a little bit, Ky and Bilal. When they were on the floor, the game and our team was drastically better. Every team felt that when those guys were on the floor.

So I definitely think that with a little more experience, a little more work, they definitely can become great defenders.

Q. Marcus, what stands out to you about Jordan Poole from what you know so far?

MARCUS SMART: His work ethic. I think we kind of all knew his work ethic, but it's true. I don't think we really understand. People who aren't around us as much in the basketball community, the fans, I don't think they really understand the work that he puts in day in and day out. Coming into these games understanding there's going to

be times where they're going to be all over you, they're going to make sure you don't get the ball. But how can you make an impact?

He's done that. He's done it with a smile on his face, with these young guys. They gravitated towards him. He's opened their eyes and allowed their games to flourish because of it.

But definitely his work ethic.

Q. How do you want to get better as a player moving forward?

MARCUS SMART: Just continue to be consistent with my work, continue to grow. I think I came here, the games that I played, I've shot the ball, especially from three, I think 39%, which is something in my career I've been trying to increase, just continue to get better at.

I'm really good at passing the ball. I can get in the lane. The real knock on me was my shooting. Continue to get better there. By me doing that, it's going to help the team get better.

Q. I know the kind of joke around is these guys call you and Khrist Unc. When you think of how quickly the two of you had an impact with these guys, how much do you think they understood the two type of careers you both had coming into this situation, how much of a wealth of knowledge that you two could bring to them with the openness of them asking questions?

MARCUS SMART: Oh, yeah. Actually, to be honest, coming here I think they knew me and Khrist's credentials and the career we have. I don't think they really understood who we were and how and why we've had those credentials until they seen us play a couple games. Just what we bring, the mentality. Khrist is a very quiet person, but on the court he's a beast, he's a savage. You better do your homework every night. He shows that.

Then for me, everybody sees me on the court, the ferociousness I play with, the fire I play with, but off the court taking the time to say, Do it this way. I seen this, and that could help. Them coming to me and saying, Hey, what do you need to do to get better here?

You're not expecting a player like me to sit down and take that time. I think that really helped the guys understand who we were as individuals, but understand why our credentials are what they are on the court. Not only are we talking about it, we're also going out there and doing it.

You got some guys who can talk the talk but can't walk the



walk, and vice versa. Me and Khris, we can do both.

Q. When you were in Boston, you talked about them seeing you grow from a young man, husband, now father. Personally, how much are you looking forward to this off-season to giving your wife a little bit of a break and going into dad mode?

MARCUS SMART: Tremendously. She's been on me. More credit to my wife, to all the wives and significant others that are out there while we're out here doing our job. It's tough. They don't get a lot of credit, they don't get a lot of shine.

I definitely want to give a big shout-out to my wife for that, holding it down, really being a rock for us.

I'm definitely ready to get back. My son is missing me. He's at that age, six months now, where he's starting to recognize things. It's hard as a parent to be away. Now I understand what my mom and dad used to talk about. But I'm definitely ready to get back.

Thank you, guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports