

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Jordan Poole

Media Conference



Q. Now that he's had a full year as the head coach, what have you learned about Brian Keefe?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, it's a new year for him. I think it was really good for him to experience, like, a full year under his belt. I think we were able to figure out that coach is a players' coach. Extremely dedicated, extremely passionate to his craft. Loves the game.

It's something I took away from this year, and a lot of the other guys did as well, he just loves coaching and loves trying to put us in a position to be successful, each and every player. We felt that regardless of the outcome of the game, coming in and just finding ways to get 1% better in practice, on the road. That was something that's commendable.

Q. To what degree does he hold the team accountable?

JORDAN POOLE: I mean, as much as you can. I think we've built an environment where we're all capable of holding each other accountable because we know it's coming from a genuine safe space of just wanting to get better, not only as a group, but you want to see the person next to you succeed as well.

That starts with the head coach, then trickles down. Really good environment that we got going on in terms of holding each other accountable to try to become better each and every day.

Q. This team will be better next year. As far as a personal goal, are you thinking All-Star?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, definitely, definitely. Third year.

Q. This guard rotation, you, Bub, AJ, is this the guard rotation that's going to lead the team to the next championship?

JORDAN POOLE: I think we're building something pretty special. I remember sitting here last year talking about

what it takes to build a foundation, laying down the pieces. This year we definitely put the framework up for the building.

A lot of guys came in who work hard, they listen, they're willing to learn, they're extremely coachable. You mix that with a good group of guys, vets, who played high-level basketball, who are very much comfortable in themselves, they have confidence in themselves, they know what they bring to the table.

We're going to continue to add pieces to this team, but I think we laid down the pieces that need to be laid down in order to be a competitive team. It's really good to have the young guys get the reps throughout the course of the year because it teaches them, they learn from that. Now they have an off-season to hone in on the things they want to get better at, the things we'll expect from them, the organization, coming in next season.

Definitely really excited with the momentum that we have going now into the off-season.

Q. What stands out about Marcus Smart as a teammate? What did you think of sort of the hands-on demonstrations?

JORDAN POOLE: There are not many people like Marcus that come around. If you want to be a winning team, if you want to be a competitive team, if you want to be a team that establishes a culture, you need a guy like Marcus.

A lot of people, players, have specific skill sets. People are athletic, some people can shoot, some people can pass. Marcus' energy, Marcus' leadership, his impact on the game, the elite skill set that he has. You could tell from day one that a lot of the guys, a lot of the coaches in the organization were able to feed off his energy.

Something that I thought was really dope is the fans, the environment, the city also fed off of his energy as well, which is really good to collaborate with the young energy we have going on now, the youthfulness.

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I'm a big fan of Marcus. Glad to finally have him teach me how to guard as opposed to him guarding me all game, which was pretty cool.

Q. Bilal last year guarded star players. The numbers indicate he had more success this year. What did you notice from him in that regard and his growth defensively?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, I think everybody here knows how close the relationship me and Bilal have. I just love picking his brain just because he's a young, up-and-coming star in the league.

Just the way he takes pride in stopping defenders, stopping the best team, living up to the challenge each and every night of guarding the best players, locking them down. Something that doesn't come around very often. He's extremely skilled. I think he knows that. He puts it to test each and every night we're out there.

Really cool to see how hungry he is at such an early stage in his career. Yeah, we'll probably have a lot of battles this summer just because we both love our craft. I want to find ways to continue to consistently score on the best defender, get my teammates involved. He wants to be someone who wants to stop the other team's best defender. It's really cool to see his growth, to see how he's grown over the last couple years.

Q. This year obviously is pretty big for you in terms of being top on the team, your best numbers. How do you identify yourself as a player now, scoring, but also as a player-maker? How would you prioritize that?

JORDAN POOLE: I mean, I feel like I've always played the same, like, version of myself, using my speed and my talents on the offensive end to help our team, but also get teammates involved.

They kind of go hand-in-hand. When I'm aggressive and I'm looking to score and I'm looking to put the ball in the basket, that opens up opportunities for my teammates. I've always been a willing passer. I've always looked to put my teammates in the easiest possible position for them to be successful, whether that's scoring or getting them to the free-throw line, getting a matchup change.

I feel like they go hand-in-hand in terms of scoring and trying to set my team up. But I think this year was a really good representation of me being back in my normal position for the entirety of the season, getting back and just playing pretty high-level basketball when I'm in that role.

Q. What do you want to work on the most this off-season?

JORDAN POOLE: You guys always ask me the same question. I'm not telling you. I can't tell you. You're going to have to find out next year (laughter).

Q. At Media Day in September, you kind of said me playing my natural position for an entire year will help my productivity, development. How much did it help you having that consistency, not having to deal with a coaching change, all the outside distractions?

JORDAN POOLE: I think there's something that I heard, it's hard to be consistent in an inconsistent environment. I think this year was really a good representation of having a sense of direction for everybody not only on the team but in the organization. A lot of people getting more settled. Everybody knows what to expect from one another.

Then translate that to the court. I think night in and night out we knew as a team, at least the players out there, who was going to do what. As the season went along, we could just trust each other knowing who would be in what positions, who to go to for what times.

Just like the stuff of competing in real-time in basketball games. Yeah, like I said, just playing my natural position. Me and Coach BK talked about it as soon as he became head coach last year. I think we saw that from the last 25 games or so last year, then used that momentum going into this year.

Very much a product of my normal self this year.

Q. You mentioned building a culture. A lot of people in the organization have been talking about the work you put into your game. They talk about how everybody is talking about it. Do you think that sets a precedent for the young guys because you came in with talent but still work on your craft? Do you do that intentionally and see them observing it?

JORDAN POOLE: I wouldn't say I do it intentionally just because it's a part of, like, my character, the way I grew up, what got me to the position I've been in. That's not something that you turn on and turn off.

I also think we brought in the right guys who actively want to do that. They actively want to learn the right way to do things. They have open ears. They are curious in ways to learn to enhance their game, to enhance working on their bodies.

To me personally, it's the way I've always operated. I'm



just glad I get to do it, have the opportunity to do it, as being the leader of a franchise, which is pretty cool. Now we're bringing in high-character guys who also want to go about things the right way, respect the game the right way, put in the time, the energy and effort you want to put in to get the results back.

It's really cool to see the environment kind of build, for sure, yeah.

Q. Two exit interviews now. What stands out to you about the off-season plan that they set up for you?

JORDAN POOLE: What do you mean?

Q. Like, what format do they deliver the plan and how much of it is something you want to do versus what they want you to do? How much of a collaboration is it?

JORDAN POOLE: Typically in the league a lot of the younger guys probably have to be (indiscernible) a little bit more. The older you get, the more experience you have in the league, you're allowed to kind of use your own workout guys or strength and conditioning staff as you build trust within the organization and the product you put out there on the floor.

Something that I'm really excited for going into the off-season is getting to work out with some of the younger guys. Obviously want to work out with a lot of guys on the team. Getting to work out with some of the younger guys early in their careers just to see how they're utilizing their summer, just to express to them how important this time off is.

It's not just time off. It's more so just a time to work on the things you individually want to work on. We use a lot of team and practice throughout the course of the season. Now you use these months to hone in on the things you want to get better at to help us going into the next year.

Like I said, being a leader of the team, finding ways to be creative, be different, enjoy the summer, enjoy your time off, because you're so dedicated for the eight months of our season, but find ways to continue to get better and learn from the people you work out with because you can always learn something from somebody. But also teach some things that are beneficial not only now but for their career.

Q. How much does the plan for the summer change with them telling you what you need to work on as opposed to you telling them?

JORDAN POOLE: After eight months, I think you kind of got a collaborative effort of what we think we need to work on as a player, what we need as a team, what we need going into next season that can help us, also the franchise.

It differs. It just depends on who you're talking to, like what you need, what years you're in, yeah.

Q. What format do they give you? Is it a PDF? A paper? A spreadsheet?

JORDAN POOLE: Like a note.

Q. It's a note?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah. Like what we passed in class. We fold it up a couple times (laughter).

Q. Is it like...

JORDAN POOLE: The one, two, three, four? What do you know about that (laughter)?

Q. From a defensive standpoint, everybody knows what you can do offensively, but how much do you take pride in the growth that you had on the defensive side of things, especially in situations where you were a one on one defender, having to deal with that, relying on a young group behind you?

JORDAN POOLE: Yeah, that's a really good question.

At the beginning of the year, me and JJ, Coach JJ, talked about just putting me in a position to use my strength defensively, which is my speed, my anticipation, my quick hands. I think that was just kind of a testament to kind of how the season went. I think I had a career high in steals. A lot of that was just being able to play off the backside of the actions, reads.

But something that I really was able to kind of pinpoint, that was a big step in growth for our team, was how connected we were as a unit in general.

This year we felt the help, we felt the protection, we trusted our back line. Granted, we have really good defenders on our team, good shot-blockers, guys are lanky, Ky, Alex, Marcus, Bilal, like we have guys who -- Malcolm, who can guard. There's a different level, a different sense when you can trust that if you are willing to guard all out, that if you do get beat, because it happens playing at the highest level, that you have help on the backside. Or if you get beat, there will be a rotation there to help you and you can play off of that.

I think there have been times when we were able to see how attached we were. That's with a young team, a youthful team, a team who is just how learning this year what coach has implemented, the ways that we want to defend.

I think it's a really good step. It's a step in the right direction. It gives us good progress not only for our team but for me as well, just finding ways to continue to get better on that end.

Q. How much did teaching you the quarterback position catapult you offensively and how you were reading the coverages that you were seeing on a nightly basis by reading what the safeties, as you like to call them, were doing on the defensive side?

JORDAN POOLE: I was just talking about that.

For me personally, it was an extreme progression just from the beginning of this season to the end of the season. It's like a fun challenge going out there and consistently, like, getting nagging coverages, different coverages throughout the course of the year.

Seeing double-teams, hard hedges, blitzes until you have to get off the ball, or seeing just how many coverages throughout the course of the season, throughout the course of the game, is like a really fun challenge for me because you learn from things like that.

Our team was able to grow from that 'cause they're able to read and react and find consistent ways to play against these new coverages that we see.

Also, it goes back to being able to play my true position where I'm consistently knowing what to look for, how to go about that throughout the course of the game. It was really fun to experience that and learn from that and grow from that.

I think that's something, a part of the game, especially being heavy into offense, being a big piece that this team relies on, it's something that I'll always work on and continue to grow in my game.

Q. How would you describe Kyshawn George to people who aren't very familiar with him?

JORDAN POOLE: I love Ky. An intellectual, extremely hard worker. Humble. And a high-character guy. Really just impressed with the young guys we drafted this year, just how they went about their first season, how coachable they were.

Really good group. Really good group. I could sit here and talk about it all day, just how they learned and how they grew. This is only the beginning for them. It will be really cool to see how much better that they get this summer, how they come back next season, just how their careers go.

Not only for Ky, but for all the rookies, I'm such a big fan of them and happy for the careers, the way they kind of progressed throughout the season.

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