

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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AJ Johnson

Media Conference



Q. How excited are you about how everything has gone since the trade deadline?

AJ JOHNSON: I'm really excited, honestly. Having a great group of guys, great group of people around me makes it a lot easier, from the players, the staff, the organization in general. You guys, everybody. It makes it a lot easier having good people around you.

Q. How much of a breath of fresh air was it to go into an environment where they are prioritizing developing young people and having them play and discover their strengths and weaknesses?

AJ JOHNSON: Yeah, I definitely think that's a really good thing for me, just in general for the organization, to work with talented young players. The fact they have their best interests, they want to help all of us reach our full potential. They're very player-first organization. So yeah...

Q. What is something that you learned from a veteran player here?

AJ JOHNSON: Probably just about the little things, like the details of everything. Just focus for the game, having that at a high level can make you become the player that you want to be, so...

Q. What have you learned about what it requires to be effective at driving off the dribble, utilizing your natural traits?

AJ JOHNSON: What it requires?

Q. Yes, in the NBA.

AJ JOHNSON: To get to the rim?

Q. Yes.

AJ JOHNSON: I would say just I guess getting your defender to move, shift side to side. Or sometimes you usually go right past them honestly. If they're in front of

you, just go by them. Sometimes there's great defenders in this league. I feel like being able to move side to side or get the defense to shift, your awareness of knowing where the help side is on the court, knowing what spots they're in when you're driving so you can make that decision, either finish at the rim or kick out to the three or to the big or something like that. So yeah...

Q. When you look at the way your rookie season started in Milwaukee to where you end up now here, looking back at the conversations that Khris might have had with you at training camp, getting traded together, did he give any kind of comfort in that move, especially when you get moved as a rookie?

AJ JOHNSON: Yeah, no, he definitely did. Just the fact that I got drafted there with him, then being traded with him, he's definitely been there to have my back and tell me what it is and what it's not. Just be there for me in general, anything that I need. He was doing that in Milwaukee. He's doing that as soon as the trade happened. It's been good having him, for sure.

Q. A lot of talk this season when you were (indiscernible) is played under a total of 50 minutes in your time in Milwaukee because of the rotation. You get here and immediately the minutes skyrocket. You learn everything on the fly. What was the biggest thing that you learned about yourself in this entire situation?

AJ JOHNSON: It's definitely crazy. I would definitely say I've learned that I'm pretty adaptable, being able to adapt in different environments, on the fly, when I don't even expect it.

Even goes from like when I was a senior, decommitted from Texas, choosing to go to Australia and play pro, that was a totally different thing for me. Being able to adapt in a situation like that. Definitely learning to be able to adapt.

Q. Are you happy with how your rookie season went? Why or why not?

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AJ JOHNSON: I'm definitely happy. It's a blessing for me to be in the NBA, make my dream come true, something I've been wanting to do since I was seven years old. The fact that I'm on a good team like I am on, just playing, I'm alive and healthy, definitely no complaints for sure.

Q. What do you think went well for you in your best games and not so well for you in games you weren't so good in?

AJ JOHNSON: I feel like being aggressive and going out there, just playing free. If I'm not all the way familiar with the plays when I first got here, the players. Just going out there and being aggressive, being myself, I feel like those are the games where I'm having my best games.

The times where I was feeling I was trying to overcomplicate the offense or being overcomplicating in general, those are the times where I feel I didn't play as high as my best games were.

Overall I feel like I got better every game understanding.

Q. What were some of the hardest opponents you went up against?

AJ JOHNSON: I would probably say the Celtics. I only played them once when I was with the Wizards. They're definitely a good team I played.

Pacers, they were a good team.

It's curious to see each team have their own things they do. Some teams are more physical than others.

Q. How do you intend to approach the off-season? What areas are you going to focus on?

AJ JOHNSON: Honestly I'm going to work my hardest in every category that I can. Especially on my body, the details of the game, watching details, study the game. Working on every part of my game, just taking care of my body.

Q. When you talk about working on your body, is it gaining strength or weight or both?

AJ JOHNSON: Both, for sure.

Q. How does a young person go about doing that?

AJ JOHNSON: I mean, definitely putting the work in the weight room. How you eat, for sure, is very important as well. Just do both of those things as much as I can. Of course, what the organization has me doing. Just going

to...

Q. You mentioned your adaptability. On the flipside of that, hopefully this off-season is one where you don't have to adapt, not going to go to another league, stay in DC. How helpful do you think that will be for your development not having to make a transition like that?

AJ JOHNSON: I feel it's going to be really good for my development. I've been so used to having to be in another place every year, having to also get better and adjust to where I'm at at the same time. Now the fact I'm going somewhere familiar and just now I have to focus on getting better, I feel like it's going to be a lot easier.

Q. Do you think that could maybe unlock a level of your game we haven't seen yet?

AJ JOHNSON: Yeah, 100%. For sure.

Q. Are you going to stay in DC for the off-season?

AJ JOHNSON: I'm going to be back and forth a lot. But mostly in DC.

Q. Back and forth from where?

AJ JOHNSON: Los Angeles probably, California, and DC.

Q. When you look at your on-court game, what are the two or three areas the organization wants you to focus on this season?

AJ JOHNSON: On-court game?

Q. Yes.

AJ JOHNSON: Every area. They see that I can pretty much be able to do everything. They want me to be able to do everything at a high level. I feel like every category of my game.

Q. You talked about how Khrist has helped you in your transition. Can you talk about the vets and how they've helped you?

AJ JOHNSON: I think the vets we have are really good, Khrist, Marcus, Jordan Poole. Seeing that they've done it at a really high level, experience. They pretty much know. Being able to soak up information from them or having them to help us during the process has been, like, really good for us. For me, too.

Q. What did you learn about the Wizards' culture the season you've spent here?



AJ JOHNSON: Really player first, like I said. But really big on attention to details, habits, everybody, what they do every day, really making it a lifestyle.

Q. How did your perception of the Wizards before you came here and the reality of what the Wizards are like, how do they compare?

AJ JOHNSON: I mean, before I came here, I just noticed they were a really young group, really talented, stuff like that. When I came here, that's what I seen, too. I just seen that they all believed in each other and believed in themselves a lot. Despite what the season looked like, however the games went, yeah...

Q. What was the connection between the four rookies, coming in mid-season, joining a group of three?

AJ JOHNSON: Yeah, no, I feel it was honestly really cool to have three other rookies on the same team as me. It's actually just crazy 'cause of the fact that I was on a veteran team with one rookie, now I'm going to another team. The fact that I knew them already before the draft I feel like it's made a lot easier to mesh with the team.

Q. What would you say your preferred position and role are? Do you like playing on the ball, being more of a cutter?

AJ JOHNSON: I prefer on the ball. I want to be able to do everything. I want to be able to play off the ball as well. I definitely prefer being on the ball.

Q. Has the coaching staff indicated to you what your role will be?

AJ JOHNSON: Not a direct communication. I've definitely been playing back and forth with both. I feel like they know I can do both.

Q. Is that going to impact your regimen over the off-season?

AJ JOHNSON: I mean, yeah. That's something I've been working on my whole life. I've been a point guard my whole life. In high school and stuff, I was on the smaller side with size. I was forced to being a point guard. That's all I know is really being on the ball. If anything, I'm working on being off the ball.

Both of them I'm going to work my hardest, for sure.

Q. In terms of your game, what do you think you have to do to improve on three-point shooting in general?

Is it your form? Reps? Getting more shots up?

AJ JOHNSON: I think it's definitely reps, form shooting for sure. Just probably like even getting my base stronger. That will help me to be able to get lower on the court when I play in general, but help me to get into my jump shot, too. I feel like, yeah, every area, weights to reps.

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