

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Saddiq Bey

Media Conference



Q. Since we haven't spoken to you formally yet, what prompted you to join the Wizards?

SADDIQ BEY: Just a great opportunity. A blessing from God, man. I appreciate the Wizards organization for even showing interest. Tough reality kind of what I went through in Atlanta, how I ended the season, when I went down with injury.

But with the plans, when I talked to them, just knowing the direction the organization was going, it was just something that I feel it was too good of an opportunity to pass up. Great foundation, great ownership. Why wouldn't I want to be able to play with a team where you grew up, watch games, have that full-circle moment?

A lot of things that went into it. Just grateful to God they gave me the opportunity.

Q. How much went into your decision that they were happy and excited to commit to you for not only three seasons, but one season they knew you wouldn't be able to play for three quarters of the season?

SADDIQ BEY: Yeah, it's a testament to how great they are, how much they believe in me. They believe in me. So I'm forever grateful for the opportunity. I'm just excited to be able to put that uniform on for the first time, give it all I have.

Q. What were your external impressions of the Wizards and how does it compare to being on the Wizards now?

SADDIQ BEY: I grew up here, so I used to go to the games. When I really understood the game, I was kind of in that John Wall era, the city was going crazy.

Then got to college and stuff like that. Wasn't the best perception or impression from the outside of the organization, wasn't in there, as far as where the team was record-wise, being able to get back to the Playoffs, things like that.

Being from here, I didn't really hear too, too many great things of how it was going. As I've got here, even last year not being here, I saw the competitiveness, the fight, then actually being here knowing the plan, kind of see how it was going, how the tide is kind of turning.

It's a great thing to be a part of, being able to watch from the outside in, watching these guys grinding each and every day, looking at the front office, the coaching staff, support staff, everyone is on the mission of being better. It's positive momentum in a positive way.

It was great to see. No matter what, the record doesn't reflect how great and positive it's been, where I can see it going. It's a great telltale sign.

Q. How close were you by the end of the season to returning? At what point did the decision get made?

SADDIQ BEY: Yeah, there was no timetable on my return. Even my whole family wanted to know. There was no specific timetable that I had or the organization had. It was whenever I was healthy, whenever I was fully able to come.

I would say I'm healthy now. Had the Playoff series happened, I'd be fighting. Just more of an organizational thing for me to just make sure I'm fully, fully ready to be able to play and commit and be in that uniform.

Q. Players often talk about how long rehabs can be. You're not always traveling, participate in the game. What did the team do to help you along?

SADDIQ BEY: Everyone helped, everyone. Everyone on the support staff just really helped me kind of stay sane kind of. Basketball is such a big part of my life, always has been. Not playing is definitely tough as a competitor. Being able to be around the guys, being able to try to help as much as I can. Only played for four years, but being able to use those four years of experience that I have, to be able to help the first- and second-year guys, trying to

get them as much experience as I've had, try to tell them things.

Kind of be around the team, see throughout the season how the year continues to get better, how guys continue to get better, how the team overall has gotten better. The morale and everything has led in a positive direction.

Obviously wasn't the result I wanted. I wanted to be able to play. Just being able to see the improvements, man, is something I'm grateful for. Being part of something bigger than myself.

Q. You talk about the process of staying sane. When was a moment when it was really tough? Was there someone from the team that really helped you?

SADDIQ BEY: I think just everybody. I'm more of a reserved guy. I have a lot of aspirations and goals in this league. So I think just everyone is being themselves.

Nothing specific. I feel like everyone helped in more ways than they even thought. People just being themselves. The chef being himself. Everyone just being who they are helps because it just keeps the normalcy of it.

Wasn't really asking me about when you going to come back, stuff like that. It was kind of just normal. For me, watching every game was tough. I wanted to play every game, wins or losses. That's just me as a competitor.

But everyone really helped. I'm grateful to God.

Q. When you play next season, what will the fans and the team see that you can bring to the court?

SADDIQ BEY: I'll work as hard as possible and put it all out there on the floor. Try to contribute to winning as much as I can. Try to get some of the fans to be proud of and cheer for. Really just help the tide turn in the city that I'm from, this area.

I'm just excited. I don't really talk too much, but you'll see that he's giving everything he can out there. Hope it results in something positive.

Q. In addition to all your ties to people and family here, this is where you already had made your off-season home?

SADDIQ BEY: Yeah, I'm here. It's the only place I have a place in, so... I'll be here, be around the city and the area. Just to immerse myself into the area and get ready for next season.

Q. What was it about the old Wizards teams that captured your imagination?

SADDIQ BEY: I think my first Wizards games I was it was Caron Butler, Antawn Jamison, DeShawn Stevenson, Brendan Haywood, that team. Maybe Etan Thomas was on that team, as well, I think. Eddie George was the coach maybe at that time. Something like that.

I remember the jerseys. I'm just from the area so I know everything. I was in the nosebleeds, though. My head was definitely on the ceiling of the arena.

Just being there, being there, getting those tickets, being able to step foot inside that arena, be all the way up in the nosebleeds. You don't even think as a kid you'll be able to come back and play for the same team you watched.

That team was exciting. That was a great team actually. Some years kind of went through a change. Then when John got there, him, Brad, Porter, them guys, Morris twins. That was a whole different shift. Brought a little more energy to the city. (Indiscernible) Playoffs.

I remember all the Wizards teams from those years. I want to be able to put my name in history as well as much as I can, whenever I have the opportunity.

Something I take pride in. Just want to give the fans something to really cheer about.

Q. Can you name any players that stood out to you?

SADDIQ BEY: On the team?

Q. Yes.

SADDIQ BEY: That stood out to me? Hmm... I think everyone for me. I think for 82 games, we had a lot of guys, a lot of minutes. Some teams have, like, eight-man, seven-man rotation. This team this past year, everyone got an opportunity. You got a chance to see everyone in their best of moments. Everyone had a great game at some point in the season.

Being able to see everyone's great game stuck out to me. I think everyone's morale, no matter the record, it wasn't a reflection of who this organization is. To see everyone's best moments, see the momentum turn in a great way, especially to the last game.

Q. Did you get the chance to give advice to the young guys, even though you were off rehabbing a lot? What were you able to tell them, if so?

SADDIQ BEY: More of a one-on-one guy. During the game, practice... Just seeing what they see. I know probably some of the films they were going through, some of the reads, something they may have not seen, trying to figure out.

Just a little more technical stuff throughout the game. Just things that rookies go through, second-year guys go through. Tried to give them my experience. Know that we'll be growing together. Their first, second year, my fourth, fifth years. It's good, man, being able to talk to them. I watched them improve throughout the season. It was great to see.

Q. What did you learn about the game of basketball from sitting out and watching?

SADDIQ BEY: I knew I love the game, but it was a whole 'nother level of love and obsession I have over the game. I wanted to play so bad, be healthy, try to contribute as much as I can.

I just learned that I've always known this since I was a kid, but you definitely can't take the game for granted. Grateful to God for the years I have, try to make the most of them, because you never know when this opportunity might be taken away from you. You really cherish those moments.

Q. A decade ago or before that, Sidwell wasn't considered a basketball hotbed. How much pride do you take in knowing you helped it grow?

SADDIQ BEY: Yeah, it's something that, like you say, didn't expect. I'm just grateful to God for giving me a chance to be able to play there. Like you say, it wasn't a hotbed at first. Wasn't a national powerhouse. I think the first pro we had, Josh was there first.

But then like the team I came in with, those guys that were playing, they set the tone. When I came in, just trying to be the best players we can. Seeing where they at now, nationally ranked boys and girls, it is great to see it.

I went to the game when they played St. John's. I talked to the team after the game. When I got there, we had one sweat suit our whole year. We had to pay for it, as well. Team shoes, got to pay for it. Had to pay for shoes. Now they have a Jordan brand sponsorship. Now they have all these clothes and gear, play a national schedule.

It's crazy to see the difference, but in a positive way. It is a testimony to the school, to Sidwell, to the players, the coaching staff. It's the same coaching staff that was there when I was there. Just how much better they've got. The recognition that they deserve. It's really coming into

fruition. It's really showing the rest of the country how much of a powerhouse that school is. The respect that they deserve, we deserve from the get-go. It's great to see.

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