

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Will Dawkins

Media Conference



WILL DAWKINS: Good evening, everyone. Appreciate you all staying a little later than normal on this two-day draft process.

First I want to say successful draft night for the Wizards. We added two players, but more importantly two people who we feel fit us and where we are going.

Secondly, we were blessed to have a tremendous draft room tonight in this facility. So thank you CISCO, Jim and our partnership group for making sure we had our ability to do the draft, with Cap One where we normally do it, undergoing renovations. We found a beautiful home to do the draft and it made our job easier tonight.

As you guys know, each night in the draft is different. Every draft is different. Tonight we walked in with six and eight. We were able to kind of move a little bit, but acquired two players in Tre and Will who we feel are really skilled wings, skilled basketball players, who know how to move the scoreboard, and will continue to get better at doing that.

But players who have a real passion for the game. These dudes are hoopers, they're workers, they are serious craftsmen, they care about being here. They wanted to be here. That's important to us, adding those type of players.

I think we're happy with night one. Picked up a pick to get back in the draft tomorrow night in round two. So all the scouts and strategy, everybody's still downstairs trying to figure out what we do tomorrow. But I wanted to make sure I came up here, spoke with you guys first, can answer any questions that you guys have.

Q. Just how good of a shooting prospect is Tre Johnson?

WILL DAWKINS: Really good. Obviously one of his bigger strengths, Tre, when you look at how well he shot the ball off the dribble, as well as off the catch. 41% catch and shoot, 39. That's impressive at his size. I think pound-for-pound, if he's not the best shooter, one of the

best shooters in the draft.

But that's not his only skill. He's someone that can make plays, make plays for others. Averaged 19 points game in the SEC. Led the whole conference in scoring as a freshman in conference play. That's hard to do. He did it with a pretty high level efficiency shooting the ball. We're excited to add that to a team like ours.

Q. He said it was very memorable that you showed him highlights of plays. It motivated him. He's still thinking about it. Can you tell us your side of that story.

WILL DAWKINS: I got to get in front of him and tell him stop sharing or secrets, first of all (smiling).

I don't know if it was highlights, low lights or what it is. When we bring guys in, we make sure that we get a feel for who they are, they get a feel for who we are, spend a lot of time here.

We're not going to sugarcoat everything, Michael and I, it's important to be transparent. There's a lot to like with Tre, but there are some areas he has to grow, just like every other 19-year-old player. We'd rather address it on the front end, see if he can improve upon it, see what his answers are.

I would say it's fun banter, conversation. He had a film session with BK and the coaching staff that was probably a little nicer than me. In both of those he showed his IQ. That's what really stood out, his ability to remember plays, his ability to say what could you have done differently. During a workout we throw him in positions in offense, the plays we run, see how quickly he picks up on it.

The guy is a sponge. He has a high IQ. The film sessions were fun, but he's got to keep that to himself next time.

Q. The Thunder did win a championship. You were a big part of building that team. You're building a young core here. In terms of building that young core, how do you feel about where it is adding these two guys to

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the young people you already have?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, first off, congratulations to the Thunder. Good to see the city and everybody that I worked with get an opportunity to celebrate that. My family back in Oklahoma was definitely proud and happy, at the parades and all that stuff.

Every rebuild is different. Every timeline for each team is different. We're running our own race. That's the most important thing for us and everybody to understand here in DC. The first three drafts, it's only been three years, a couple weeks since myself and Michael have been here.

We feel confident in the players that we have to just grow on their own time. Adding Tre with other like-minded players, they have some versatility. They're going to compete and get after it. We're going to give them the same runway that we've given all the other players that we drafted to work on their craft. When it's time for them to play, they're going to play and get a lot of minutes here.

Q. (Question about Will Riley.)

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, there is a lot, as you can imagine, that goes on. We're fortunate to have a deep staff that can have multiple conversations with agents, multiple conversations with other teams. We're just tracking our guys throughout the draft.

Will is someone that when he first came in, we knew he kind of fit our profile. We spent a lot of time on the grassroots watching and seeing who he is as a player. He was different than what he was at Illinois. I think towards the end of the season, when they had some injuries, they put the ball in his hands a little bit. You could see who he was back when he was playing with UPlay, playing in Canada.

We knew the type of player he was. He was someone we were looking for. Again, it's our job to be strategic as possible, get the most value we can for the future, but also try to make sure we get players that we like, and that deal presented itself. It was probably the best deal at the time that we felt very comfortable with.

Q. You said Will fits your profile. Specifically what are you talking about?

WILL DAWKINS: Size, versatility, high processing speed. Again, like I said, he's one of those guys who works. He had a massive growth spurt. You just look at his face and his body, the way he's built, he's still growing. He's somebody that we feel confident is going to come into the gym and push people, develop in his own time.

He has ball skills, can make plays, assist-to-turnover ratio. He's probably a better defender than people give him credit for. We're going to test that out right away with summer league.

Q. During the pre-draft process, do you sell them on the Wizards or do they have to sell themselves on the Wizards?

WILL DAWKINS: I think it goes both ways. It's a partnership. What Michael and I try to do at the organization, we're pretty direct with that. We're probably not for everybody. Like, what we're trying to do is different. You got to want to be here and part of that.

We bring guys in and they meet with different people within the organization to get a real feel for what it's like. Like not only what is your job, but how do you help players. If I were to be here, how would you help me. They know exactly what they're getting into.

It's not the right partnership for everybody, but I think players who are serious about basketball and want to work and better themselves and use the resources we're going to give them, we're typically a good match for them.

Q. Do you see Tre as a guard or as a wing? You called Will and Tre as wings.

WILL DAWKINS: These guys are versatile. You see Bub, you see Keyshawn, Bilal get the ball, rebound. You see Alex rebound the ball, bring it up, then we'll play from there. We see them playing different positions, one, two, three, maybe four, smaller lineups.

They fit the type of mold we drafted where you have multiple decision makers, multiple handlers and now guys who can spread the floor.

Q. You talk about being honest where you want the players to improve when they come in...

WILL DAWKINS: We were pretty direct on some of that stuff, mostly used our analytics to kind of back that. I don't want to give the summer league scouting report away on their weaknesses.

Both those guys are young. They got to get better on the defensive end and get more efficient where they can. But a lot of stuff is just really for first-year players catching up with the speed of the game, working on their bodies, improving their habits, things like that. That will go a long way.



Fortunately these two guys, they (indiscernible) the gym. They're in there working. It's in their DNA. I feel pretty good about whatever their weaknesses are they are (indiscernible) those up.

Q. What did you see in Will in the grassroots evaluation?

WILL DAWKINS: More on-the-ball play. His confidence when he's on the ball, kind of in that AAU setting, he knew what he could do with the ball, score, but also find guys.

When there were some injuries with K.J., those games, watching how he competed. Went after guys in the Rutgers game. That's a high-level game with multiple first-round guys in it. The way he kind of attacked that game is what we saw in UBL play.

Q. This roster has been flipped. It's not finished. I don't know if you can talk about other moves you've made that can't be announced till July 6th, but it would seem to me that you are now in a position where the young guys are going to get the bulk of the minutes going forward. Am I reading that right?

WILL DAWKINS: Probably not completely on that one. I think you're right, I can't completely comment on everything we did yesterday. I will say that days like that, those are challenging decisions for any organization, especially one when you're in a rebuilding process.

You have to always remember to keep the main focus on the main focus and put ourselves in position to maximize where we're trying to go.

For us, that's long-term success. That's kind of going to be where we're at. We want to stay on track with that, while creating flexibility and playing time for some of these young players.

I thought Brian did a tremendous job last year at having three rookies, three of them were all top five in minutes per game. We're going to play those guys even when we have some veterans. I still think we have some pretty high-level veterans who can play, help and mentor. It's going to be tricky to kind of mix it all in. I think it's a good thing to have.

Again, we're going to invest in the guys we drafted tonight, give them every opportunity to play, find that balance. But we're trying to keep it strategic, trying to stay flexible. You know the new rules, aprons. Probably as important as having high-level players. We're going to take our craft, develop our guys, stay flexible. But on our timeline, we're not rushing that.

Q. Is it fair to say that Bub is going to get the ball? Is he going to be the one?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I think there's a lot of room to kind of talk about that. But we feel confidence when Bub has the ball. We want to make sure that we're playing a style where everybody touches it. He's going to take a step this summer. He's been in the gym with Key, with Alex, Justin, A.J.

These guys have been back since May 1st. It's pretty impressive the work that they've been putting in. They're ready for the challenge and they're ready for more opportunity.

We kind of like saying, Hey, go get it, go earn it. Everybody's going to get a chance. That will take care of itself. We'd rather have people do it that way than just give things out. I think he'll be ready for summer league.

Q. In talking with Tre and Will, what does it say about the values you and your staff have been able to instill, and is that something you want them to walk away with?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I think that's who we are at the core. We're a player-centric building. We're a people-first organization. I can't tell you the effort that Amber puts into playing these draft workouts, spending time and dinner, really getting to know these people. Anna, Jalen, the experienced people that just make sure that guys have a great experience when they come here.

These guys are traveling. They're going workout to workout, staying in hotels. You want to make sure they're comfortable while they're here. We don't just want to roll the balls out for a workout. Coach Keefe and Cody like specifically building workouts to answer questions we have about them. It's more intentional. They get to touch the (indiscernible) department, sit down and talk with analytics and learn about themselves but also how we look at things.

It is a family atmosphere. When I call 'em, it's not like, Hey, thanks, who am I going to be working with? It's like, Hey, I can't wait to see this person again, come in and know where I fit. We feel better about that.

Again, it's about actions, not about words. We care about people. We care about the community. We want it to feel like a family. We want these guys out in the community.

I think once you get to know these guys, our fans are going to love 'em.

Q. We know that Tre is a really good shooter,

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accomplished college shooter. If you were to break down his shot, what makes him the shooter he is?

WILL DAWKINS: The ball going in a lot. I expect it to continue. If you watch him go through a workout, the repetition, it's the same shot every time. He can speed it up. He can midrange, deep, four-pointers. I'm not going to oversell his shooting. This guy does that for a living. He's going to be paid to do it. It's a repeatable shot every single time.

Q. I'm not asking you to compare Keyshawn's game to Will's game, but do you see similarities in maybe how the rest of the league didn't quite guide them in the way the Wizards guide them and their feel for the game?

WILL DAWKINS: I'll say this, it was a deep draft. It was really hard to make some of these decisions when you're going through and looking at the players that are available, the different picks that are being moved around.

I think when you go and study this draft, people drafted for them, they drafted for their fit. For us, you talk about Keyshawn, who I think is going to be someone that you see the work he's really putting in and how his year two is going to look, you guys are going to be excited the gains he's making. Hopefully you do that with every player.

With Will, he again is someone that's big, versatile. Probably wasn't known as much for being a two-way player. We're going to hark to continue to do that.

He's got some special skills with the ball that I didn't get to unlock. For us, being on a grassroots circuit, being on that stuff early, gives you a head start. That's why we have our grassroots scouts out there early. I'm telling them to make sure I didn't skip UBL. Got to go see those dudes.

The game is different when you're drafting these guys off one year six months on campus. We think there's more there to unlock. That's why we had them as high as we did. We're happy to have him, have Keyshawn. Those guys will be in the gym all night, I can guarantee that.

Q. You mentioned earlier you liked when you saw when Will got a chance to get more on-ball due to some injuries. How much do you value getting actual tape from these guys in real-game situations that they can play both on and off the ball?

WILL DAWKINS: It's invaluable. I also want to say we have a very deep scouting department. Ted, Michael allow us to have a deep roster. Really use resources to travel and see these guys live, go to their practices.

You don't want to just see them in game situations. Obviously we watch film, as well. Amber kind of leads that group, makes sure we have full coverage. We have people in the analytic department, someone's injured, try to go watch that stuff. It's all connected.

We try to make sure what we're seeing is connected with what we're reading through the numbers. Obviously the intel when you're talking to all the people around them that you're drafting your type of people. Finding those gains when other players are injured, they get to do more, that gives you little glimpses to study.

Again, there's different ways to evaluate, but that's a piece we look for, too.

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