

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Corey Kispert

Media Conference



(In progress)

COREY KISPERT: There's a lot of new that comes with it. Kind of freeing yourself from any expectations and taking things as they come has been a recipe for me to improve year over year. A lot of times I have strong expectations, both of myself and of the team or whatever. I tend to grip the wheel really hard to try to force it to make it happen, and that is a recipe for disaster, so this year I'm going to be more go with the flow and usually that ends up making things turn out the way you want it to.

It's kind of weird with the life-work stuff. I'm committed to being a little bit more relaxed, a little bit more expectation-free in a lot of different ways coming into this year.

Q. Off the court for you, we know you're a proficient golfer. Is there anything you would like to say to anybody else in the basketball universe who might have questions about who the most proficient golfer in the league is?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, it's no secret that video post from earlier kind of rubbed me the wrong way. I felt left out. I felt excluded. This is kind of an opportunity to stack myself up against anybody else in the league. I'm ready to take on that opportunity in whatever way it shows up. Whether it's in the off-season or in season, I'm ready for it.

Q. Corey, how did your recovery go, and how did it impact what you were able to do last year?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, I thank God for modern surgery. By the time I left here, which was about a week after the season ended, I felt like I had a brand new thumb. After that, it was a little bit of physical therapy, and I barely noticed it, barely recognized that I had surgery, and was able to make a full off-season push coming into this year.

Really grateful for the surgeon that took care of me and the process of all that from the team helping me out with recovery to physical therapy at home and things like that.

Absolute non-factor coming into the season, and I'm really grateful for that.

Q. Corey, you said that you want to come in a little more expectation free, but knowing you in the last couple of years, you've always had at least one specific thing that you wanted to come into the season with. I know being a competitor it's tough to be expectation free. But if there is something specific, what would that be for you coming into this year that you want to see from yourself?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, I mean, I guess obviously I can clear that up. Expectation free is probably the wrong term, but me holding my expectations a little bit lighter is a better way to put it. I need to be more aggressive this year for our team to be success and for me to be success. I play the right way. I play a good brand of basketball. I have a really high IQ on the court. Asserting myself on the game more, whether it's scoring or defense or rebounding, physicality are all ways I can help this team out.

In a lot of different ways, when I am my most aggressive and I am my most assertive, it helps our team. You play better basketball that way, and it's a way that I can make an impact on the court.

So aggression, assertiveness, and sort of making the other team feel my impact right away is something that I want to take head on this year, no matter how many minutes I play or what I play or who we play against. That imprint on the game needs to be the same no matter what.

Q. To your point, in terms of leadership, you're in kind of that generation where you have played with the younger ones behind you and older ones ahead of you, but what do you want your leadership style to be in that regard?

COREY KISPERT: Yeah, I want to have the energy of a young guy and play like a vet. That's kind of the mix of both. That's the blessing of being in the middle is you can kind of take the best of both ways. I'm smart enough to

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know better than a lot of the rookies in our team and I'm expected to not make the mistakes that they might, but I also have -- I have a lot less miles on my legs than some of the older guys on our team, too. To be able to balance back and forth, be the bridge between the two, is a really unique opportunity.

We talked as a team about the unique opportunity that we have person to person, and I would argue my opportunity personally is just about as unique as anybody here.

Q. Before the thumb injury and then surgery, you seemed like you found your rhythm in BK's offense and kind of figuring out how to play, how he wanted you to play, how you fit within the offense. How much can you take away from that now that you're healthy heading into this season knowing personnel has changed but your role can be the same, kind of tying into you knowing that you have to be more aggressive?

COREY KISPRT: Yeah, aggression was the reason why I started to play well before I got hurt. It was not just a week of playing well. It was a sustained period. I had a really tough start to last year, and while I was figuring it out where I landed in the mix of everything, when I found my stride, I really found my stride. Aggression was a big part of that.

So whether I'm -- last year I came off the bench, and being an impact player from the moment my foot hit the floor, middle of the first quarter was a huge emphasis, and that was something that I can carry into this year.

I don't have the luxury of getting warmed up on the court. I don't have the luxury of finding my rhythm and getting into the feel of the game. That has to happen immediately. A lot of reps of that last year, which I can take into this year, will do nothing but help me.

Q. Last year you and I spoke a couple of times about the defense and you wanting to take strides on that end of the floor, you taking it personal that people were hunting you out as the matchup. What does that next step look like for you heading into the season on the defensive end, and what's the mindset you're going into it with?

COREY KISPRT: You know, I mean, aggression doesn't just stop on the offensive side of the ball. I've been blessed with a big frame, an athletic frame, and this year is about using that to my advantage, taking the fight to the offensive player rather than sitting back and reacting. You see a lot of the best defenders in the league dictating what's going on rather than reacting to things that other

people do.

So yeah, this last year was about taking things personally, and I feel like I took a big step in that direction, and now again, it's imprinting my will on the game on both sides of the ball, defense included.

Using more of the abilities that I have to my advantage rather than trying to figure it out as I go. Going into year five, I feel like I have a really good idea of the player that I am, the player that I can be. I can maximize the role that I'm in. I know which way I want to expand my game. Being comfortable in my own skin has allowed me to take some pretty cool steps this off-season that I'm really excited to show.

The defensive side of the ball is obviously a huge part of that, and I think I can expect to be a much different and much better version of myself, especially on that end.

Q. Corey, as the longest-tenured Wizard, how do you feel your first impressions of the newcomers, specifically Tre Johnson and Cam?

COREY KISPRT: Yeah, they work. That's the first impression. Really impressed by the way they carry themselves and by the way they handle their business. We do not lack for hours spent in the gym, and that's a really good place to start.

It's hard to coach work ethic. It's hard to coach desire and want. You can shape up the rough edges when it comes to schemes and plays and cohesiveness and chemistry, but you can't teach somebody to get in the gym and want it.

These guys have that. That's a really exciting place to start.

Obviously the season will shake out the way it does, but if you're starting from that point of guys being in the gym and wanting to get better, actually getting better becomes a lot easier.

Q. Last year the defensive improvement started at a very elemental level. It seemed like over the course of the season you guys figured that out. You talk about jump seasons here; where is the jump season defensively as you see it for this group?

COREY KISPRT: Yeah, I think the jump season comes from a mentality rather than a mental part -- like you talked about, there were times last year where we showed it. We played the big dogs. We played the teams that are at the top of the standings, and we took the fight to them.



Then there were other games where we laid down, quite frankly. No matter who we play this year and no matter what environment or where we are, the mentality can't change. You have to take stuff personally. You have to own your matchups, no matter who is wearing the jersey on the other side, whether it's a Hall of Famer or a rookie. That stuff is really easy to let get into your head when you're a young team and you can play to the level of the team that's been playing against.

But we want to change our identity as a team and as an organization, and we want to be in a place that people aren't so excited to go play. We want teams to leave sore and tired and frustrated, and that can't change depending on who you play.

Q. Will talked about how last year sometimes minutes were given rather than earned. What did that look like to you, and how is it different this year? Will has talked about more competition.

COREY KISPERS: Yeah, as a player in this league, you want to invite competition, and you want to invite a meritocracy and you want to invite the opportunity to go earn it for yourself.

When you're playing on a team where sometimes that isn't the case, that can be frustrating at points, certainly. Zooming out and knowing where we are as an organization is a good reminder that that stuff is necessary and it's part of the process of becoming an organization and a place that you want to play in and you want to be a part of as we rise through the ranks and become a better team throughout the years.

I am so happy that everybody in this organization and in our locker room feels like they have an even chance to go get it, and that allows the cream to rise to the top, and it allows the best players to earn the most minutes. That's all you want as a player. Whether that shakes out in your favor or not, at least you were given the chance, and having the opportunity to go earn it and to go make your claim on the season is what we live for.

So having an even playing field to start this season feels really refreshing, and it's a way that you can make competition before the game has even started.

Q. What do you think will look different about your game this season?

COREY KISPERS: I think just the way I carry myself on the court. It's a mark of moving along in your career. There's milestones. Signing a second contract is a big

milestone for players in the league. You're given -- you can actually wear that with confidence and wear that with pride. People know that about you. They're going to come at you in a different way. But you also know that your feet are settled and you've made your mark and you're here.

So I can kind of have that in my back pocket and move with a lot more confidence now this year than I ever have before.

So the confidence and swag in the aggression and assertiveness is going to be the biggest change more than any specific skill set.

But the thing about confidence is it often makes you a better player. So things will look better. I will look better. Just because of the way that I approach the game and the way that I approach my job and the way that I feel about where I am.

Q. So many games in the NBA are won and lost on the three-point line, and you guys are obviously a very young team that might just get better at that over time, but what kind of steps do you think you can take to maximize what you do have in terms of personnel to improve as a three-point shooting team?

COREY KISPERS: It starts with the types of threes that you're shooting. Not all threes are created equal. Shooting them just to shoot them is not a good strategy. You have to make sure the right people are getting the right shots and make sure that the open ones are the ones that you take and you work for better ones.

Again, it's not a -- the type of shots that different people get to shoot is not equal across the board. You have to funnel shots to people that are going to make them and make them at a high level, and that's what wins games.

Everybody needs to step up and shoot them with confidence. Some people more than others. That's just the way it's going to shake out.

But like you said, games are won and lost there, and in order to win a lot of games in the NBA, you have to shoot them well. So that comes with finding the right ways and taking them when you have them.

Q. How can Tre Johnson help that cause?

COREY KISPERS: He can shoot it, man. He tears the nets off these rims. To have a guy that you can in a bind -- have anybody in the league where if you're in a bind offensively and you can throw it to him and let him work is a luxury, and he's wired to score and he's wired to put the



ball in the bucket. Having guys like that on your team is a safety blanket really. It's a luxury for everybody.

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