

Washington Wizards Media Conference

Monday, September 29, 2025

Washington, DC, USA

Bilal Coulibaly

Media Conference



Q. Year three, so you've got two young classes that have come behind you. We've talked about their growth and development, but what is the status with your arm, et cetera, coming into training camp?

BILAL COULIBALY: I'm feeling a lot better. I had my surgery and all that. Trying to get back on the court as soon as possible. We're just going step by step taking care of the hand, not playing around with it. I'll be back better.

Q. Looking at the next step for you, obviously a lot of attention on where your game is developing. What are going to be the top priorities for you?

BILAL COULIBALY: I'd say being a leader, leading the team, because there's a lot of young guys now, so yeah, lead that team to success and just compete, show the right attitude, the right mindset every day, and just going to get everybody to follow me.

Q. I asked AJ about high-flying dunks. Cam Whitmore is a high flying dunker. Is there any internal competition amongst yourselves?

BILAL COULIBALY: Yeah, we're going to have some competition on that, going to show off a little bit.

Q. (Indiscernible).

BILAL COULIBALY: Yeah, got hurt on that second game, but I was like, man, it happens. Got to go get something. Got to get further than that. But yeah, cut it short. I just want to represent my country, play for them, and be there for my guys.

Q. What have been your early impressions of Tre Johnson?

BILAL COULIBALY: He's a shooter, man. He can shoot the ball. Really confident. I've seen him play a little bit. They've been playing a little bit, and he's definitely -- he's not scared, taking his shot, driving the ball. He's been a better passer, too, and he's improving, too.

Q. Before the injury, what were the one or two things you really wanted to get better at this off-season? How did you accomplish that? What lab were you in, whether it was here or somewhere else? And going forward, how do you plan to continue to develop on those things?

BILAL COULIBALY: Yeah, been working a lot here in D.C. and in France, too, before summer camp. But working a lot on my body, my game too, my handling, my shot. I've been working a lot on my game and I was trying to be aggressive when I was at the French national team, then got hurt. I was just trying to be aggressive and create for me and my teammates.

Q. When you say "aggressive," do you mean aggressive in terms of getting downhill or aggressive in terms of creating shot opportunities for your team?

BILAL COULIBALY: I'm talking about getting downhill and then it's just a read. I can pass the ball, I can finish. It was just the reads after that. But yeah, just going downhill.

Q. What has stood out to you the most so far about the vets on the team like Khris and CJ?

BILAL COULIBALY: Being here. They're always in the gym with the young guys. They're not resting. They're not like, oh, yeah, we all got it. No, they've been working and they've been playing with the guys after practices and all that. They're really involved in the team.

Q. You said that you wanted to work on your leadership skills. How would you quantify that and classify what you want that to look like because great leaders are also good listeners. Tell us what you've gleaned in the first two years in the NBA in that regard?

BILAL COULIBALY: I had a lot of different vets and asked a lot of questions. Everybody got a different opinion about the NBA, about how you play and all that. Yeah, they've been answering my questions, and now I've got a lot of

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

knowledge. I can give it to the younger guys. Yeah, whenever they ask questions and all that, I'm just going to answer all the time or find an answer.

Q. Is that something you're going to be just waiting for, you're going to wait for their questions?

BILAL COULIBALY: No, definitely not. When I see them doing something wrong or right, I'll tell them. Yeah, I'm always talking to them. They've been listening a lot, so it makes it way easier.

Q. The vets that are here, what have you learned so far from them on the court?

BILAL COULIBALY: Yeah, we've been talking a lot. Khrist was here last year, too, but CJ, we've been practicing together. Learned a lot about them. CJ, I can't wait to chat more with him.

Q. We've heard a lot about the competition that's going to be a central point early in the season, especially in the wing. Is it frustrating for you that the thumb injury is going to keep you out for most of the season when that competition is going to happen?

BILAL COULIBALY: It is definitely. I'll still be working, though. I'll still be out there with the guys. It will look like I'm on the court. I've been way more vocal this year, so yeah.

Q. What do you think you need to do in the early part of the season to establish yourself in that competition after missing some time?

BILAL COULIBALY: Just go out there and hoop, like do my thing. Offensively, defensively, both sides of the ball, so yeah, I'll do that.

Q. You said you worked on your shooting in the off-season. What did that look like?

BILAL COULIBALY: Just getting a lot of reps. That's it most of the time.

Q. Just wanted to go back to the EuroBasket. The outcome was not what you expected personally. As a team, what was the main reason for this, and how do you expect this experience to be helpful for you for the upcoming season?

BILAL COULIBALY: We had to adjust a lot because a lot of guys went down. Other guys got hurt, and I'm one of those guys. It was tough for the team. We had one big at the end of the tournament. It was tough for us to make

those adjustments. We didn't have much time. So I'd say that was probably the main thing.

Q. How will your experience be helpful for the next season?

BILAL COULIBALY: For sure. I'll try to adjust a little bit more faster this year, like whenever something happens, you've got to be better than that.

Q. Have you met Cam Whitmore yet, and what have your first impressions of him been like?

BILAL COULIBALY: Yeah, I did. Real athletic. They were playing ones last day and we were talking on the side with A.G. and you can tell that he's really strong, he can get to the rim whenever he wants, real athletic, can finish, can shoot the ball. Yeah, he can defend too. He's an all-around player, man. Can't wait to share the court.

Q. Have you found a good balance between basketball and your personal life?

BILAL COULIBALY: Yeah, I did. My family is always here, so whenever we don't have games, whenever I'm finishing my workouts in the morning, I just spend time with them. We always find something to do, some activities. My sisters love to do some golf and stuff like that.

Yeah, I've found that balance I'd say.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.