

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Washington, DC, USA

## CJ McCollum

### Media Conference



Wizards 132, Hawks 113

#### **Q. CJ, could you just explain your 46-point night?**

CJ McCOLLUM: I hit shots. I hit a bunch of threes, missed two free throws. But I think overall, I think we played with good pace. I think we came out with the right mindset. Defensively we were great in the first quarter and we got stops, we ran, spaced the floor well, passed the ball pretty well, kept our turnovers low until the end of the game.

But I think we gave ourselves a chance to win tonight, and I work really hard on my craft every day, so I'm not surprised. I'm surprised I missed two free throws. Three of the threes I missed were wide open, so I've got to tighten it up a little bit.

But I think overall we're just -- always say, just keep swimming. We're working on our craft every day. We're doing things the right way, and we don't always get the results that we want. But the intention is there. The preparation is there. Eventually it translates, and I think tonight was a day where it translated long enough for us to win.

We should probably have seven or eight wins right now, but with the team learning, growing, trying to stack days like this.

#### **Q. You're now a part of a very elite group of players who have dropped 45 plus for three different franchises. Is that a point of pride for you to be able to go to a different place and still supply that same level of offense?**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah. I mean, I should have had 50 tonight.

But I think that's what I've done my whole life, man. I prepare. I maximize my talent. I take advantage of each day. These types of nights, they happen, but for me, it

starts with how I start my days, how I finish my days. When we've got a back to back, I spend the day with my family, and once we put our kids down, I go to the gym.

I work out with my guy Diggs. Next night, same thing, go through the day, get my work in with DB, come back at night, get my work in with Diggs, get my work in with my PT. We do some movement stuff. We do core stability and we lift and we take advantage of each day and we stack them.

Sometimes you have great nights, sometimes you don't, but the work is the work, and I consistently have done it since I was five years old. I had this vision and this dream of what I was going to live my life like, maximizing my talents. It doesn't matter where I go, my game translates everywhere the way I play, catch and shoot, off the bounce, I can shoot in the corner, run the offense. I can do a lot of different things, and I think you guys will see throughout the season that that's what I do.

#### **Q. Atlanta cuts the lead, you call a time-out, you come back and hit a three. You've been this way since Lehigh. Do you just embrace those moments?**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah, got a great screen, caught it, got it closed out. We worked on shot prep, just being ready, loading up, and just being deliberate with the release. D talks about machines, machines just grab the pop and drop the pop. You keep doing it over and over, you put the money in the machine and it does it over and over. You don't change anything until there's a malfunction in the machine.

Historically I haven't had many malfunctions in my game. It's just continuing to swim every day, get in the water and swim.

#### **Q. You tied the franchise record for threes in a game. Were you aware of that?**

CJ McCOLLUM: No, I would have shot a couple more (laughter). I don't like tying records. It's either you break it or you don't. We'll revisit this and I'll hit 11.



**Q. We watched Alex Sarr last year, and I can't remember him being as physical around the basket as he was or he has been this year. But going up against a guy like Porzingis, just going right at him, what have you made of the way that he's learned how to use his physicality?**

CJ McCOLLUM: I mean, he's been great all year. He prepares. The results are going to come when you prepare the way that this team has historically done player development. They've done a great job getting with their coaches, watching film, getting their work in in the morning, getting their work in at night.

When I went to the gym last night Bilal was in there. Two guys ago Bub was in there. Guys are getting their work in consistently, and that's why you get results. They're hungry. They understand this is a special opportunity to take advantage of your talents in a city like this, which is a great city, a great organization. They're giving you freedom to explore your game, so it's a disservice to not take advantage.

**Q. With the ability that you all have been able to kind of stack these stretches together to start the season and now you've had a couple of games where you've been able to do it for nearly a full 48 before tonight, is this something that as vets you, Corey, AG, Khris, can go to the young guys and say this is kind of what we've been talking about since training camp, that when you stack the right habits and you learn to fight through runs and be resilient, this is how we can put things together to continue to play the right way?**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah, absolutely. I think we've made strides in the right direction. The results just haven't been there consistently for us, but I think we've played better basketball throughout the season, from the beginning to now. Even some of the losses at Minnesota, obviously we got down 26 and came back and got it down to six against a really good team.

The strides that we're taking and making are showing, but now it's about sustainability. I think we're translating our work in private to 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., and I think that's what it's about, learning how to play through mistakes, learning how to execute in time-outs, learning how to go on a run, learning how to respond to a run. I think you have to go through it, and I think now we're starting to understand it's a long game, there's going to be lulls, there's going to be times where they go on runs, but if we keep doing what we're supposed to be doing possession after possession, we'll have more nights like tonight.

**Q. As much as people may watch the game and understand the physical work that goes into it, what is also the mental aspect and that type of work that takes to be able to withstand a team going up 27 in Minnesota, Atlanta cutting it to 13 here tonight and just being able to take those punches but having the mental power to punch back?**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah, I think this league is full of talented players. Everybody is talented. But the players that have that mental fortitude to push forward, and the ones that last long and the ones that are able to make a difference consistently throughout a season, we're all good at basketball. We all have great staff. We all have great resources, you know, chefs, everything to separate the separators mentally. Can you push through? Can you lock in? Can you focus? Can you not waver under pressure? Can you be consistent when things are going well? Can you be consistent when things aren't going well?

I think for me, I could have been 2 for 7 tonight. The mentality is the same. The approach is the same. How I carry myself is the same, in the locker room, at home with my family. I'm just consistent in terms of how I approach the game.

When I go home, my kids don't care if I have 45 or 2, but I think the difference is throughout a season -- if you turn on a game you shouldn't be able to tell if somebody is shooting well or not. You should just see them playing hard and executing. I think we're getting to that level and to that point.

**Q. It seems like Bub had one of his best games of the season tonight. What do you think helped him perform that way and how can he build on that moving forward?**

CJ McCOLLUM: I think he wasn't hesitant tonight, besides the three that he turned down when he traveled. I just told him you've got to shoot the ball. I think he's continuing to figure out his balance between making plays, getting in the paint and then taking his own shots.

But he's been in the gym at night. He's really paying attention. He's watching film and he's learning his own game and learning the NBA game all at the same time in year two. I think he's going to continue to make strides.

We're not even a quarter of the way through the season. What is this, game 16? There's a lot of growth that's going to take place, and by the time we get to Christmas, I think he'll be much more comfortable.

**Q. CJ, as a vet, do you believe in the notion of the hot hand?**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah, absolutely. I think there's such a thing as a flow state, and I think the best players find it more often than not, like Steph. Obviously he's figured out ways to continue to kind of live in the flow state, but then the veteran presence of their team, they get him the ball, right, there's movement, there's sets, there's plays, but there's also offensive rebounds.

I think when you do things the right way, the ball finds you. The ball finds energy. But I do believe in the hot hand.

**Q. When you're on a heater like tonight, is there any sense of where you're getting your shots from or it just feels right when it leaves your hand?**

CJ McCOLLUM: I knew I was going to have a good game today just because I had two days off. Slowly my margins of error have been close. I've been missing wide-open threes. I've been missing lay-ups. So I'm right there. We talked about it, watched the film. Me and Diego were laughing. I was like, I'm right there. I'll be going for 40 from three in three games because the margins are like this. I'm missing slightly left, in and out.

I was like, it's right there. I was like, once I get this extra work in, kind of tighten things up, tighten the screws a little bit, I was like, we're on the cusp of like an explosion.

I felt good, I had back to back, I got a workout in after the back to back, I got another one in, and then I got great movement, stability lifting where my body feels good. I got to play with play dough with my son today. I got to watch Cars with my daughter. Like I feel good. Euphorically, my body feels good. I've allowed my work to kind of dictate how I approach these games, like I've been prepared, but obviously it was only a matter of time. I told them at shootaround tonight, it's going to be a nice night for everybody tonight, especially me.

**Q. You tied Trevor Ariza for the three-point record --**

CJ McCOLLUM: That's my guy.

**Q. What's that mean to you, tying him?**

CJ McCOLLUM: I love Trev; that's my guy, man. I want to break it now that I know it's his. He's a really good dude. His son is nice, too. His son is really good at basketball. He's just a good spirit, really good spirit. I enjoyed my time with him for sure.

**Q. If I could ask about that crazy run in the first**

**quarter. You had a big night but you weren't alone out there. Corey Kispert was also on it. Can you describe watching the baton get passed the whole time like that and watching someone else --**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah, this is a guy who just does his job consistently. Some nights he plays a lot, some nights he doesn't. Doesn't complain, works every day, shows up. He's in his quarter-zip getting his jumpers in, getting in the weight room consistently. You like to see guys have success that take the game seriously. I do think it's the right way, and they're well-intentioned individuals.

**Q. With Alex and his defense, what have you noticed about him as a rim protector but also his ability to deter teams from going inside?**

CJ McCOLLUM: I think his motor has continued to get better defensively in terms of understanding that he can block shots. He's going after them more, and I think coaches continue to challenge him like you've got to contest everything. I think he's doing a better job of that and utilizing that athleticism and that timing.

**Q. What can that do for a defense down screen having someone like that on the back nine?**

CJ McCOLLUM: We know we can funnel players towards him and that he's going to protect us. Obviously we've got to crack back and block out his man when he jumps and goes for the ball, but I think he's continuing to take real strides and he had a great defensive possession on the switch. He got the steal and went down and got fouled on the lay-up, so he's continuing to do a better job of taking the challenges.

**Q. As a former Trail Blazer, you played out there over a decade, a Chinese player named Yang Hansen was drafted by Portland this year. Could you give him some advice on how to adjust to the Trail Blazers and the city of Portland?**

CJ McCOLLUM: Yeah, I think he's got a great group of leaders around him. I obviously stay close to Damian. That will be helpful teaching him the ins and outs of the league, preparation, how to take care of your body, what restaurants to eat at. Dame loves sushi, so I'm sure he's probably told him about bamboo sushi and all the spots that he likes out there. But all in all, I think he's in a great spot. I think they're going to do a great job of nurturing him to develop, and I think he's got a bright future.

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