

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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## Justin Champagnie

Media Conference



Wizards 116, Grizzlies 112

**Q. You've made four of your last six threes for the past two games. How much have you stressed getting the jumper right?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think it's been more so a confidence thing with me with my jump shot. I missed a lot in the beginning of the season, and I'm trying to start to get back used to just catching it and putting it up and being confident in my shot, staying in the gym a lot and try to work on it.

My teammates still find me. My teammates still believe in me and trust in me, and they put a lot of confidence in me to go out there and go play my game. It's been a big emphasis for me, and glad to see it start finally coming through.

**Q. There was this one pretty curious lineup starting the fourth the last two games. What about that is working so well?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think we kind of just, in that unit, just guard them, play as hard as we can on defense, kind of let the defense dictate our offense, get out and run in transition. They've got a whole bunch of shooters, whole bunch of great scorers. But yeah, really on the defensive end just be really gritty and just make teams uncomfortable.

**Q. Tonight you had a double-double, 10 points and 12 rebounds. Take me through the mindset that you had throughout the game.**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I mean, to start the game off, I was 0 for 3 at halftime, and I just told myself, just do what you do, rebound the ball, play hard, play defense and try and give your team the energy and then just let the game find you. My teammates found me, and it kind of just opened up for me, and that was pretty much it in my head. But emphasis on the rebound for sure.

**Q. For your size and for your height, what's one thing, any advice that you would give people at your size to go out there and do what you do?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Be relentless in pursuit of the ball, I would say. A lot of times I don't have a straight path to the glass or straight path to the rebound, but I try to find avenues to use my speed, my quickness and my strength to my advantage and then go grab the board.

But definitely like an undying pursuit to go get it.

**Q. You guys won the rebounding battle by 12 tonight. That hasn't been the case a lot this season. What was different about the way that you guys played and what you were seeing from Memphis and what were you doing differently that allowed you guys to win the rebounding battle?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think knowing that they play a big lineup with Aldama and Jaren Jackson down there, so just put a body on them, hit them and go get them. Everybody crash the glass. Towards the end of the game, I know Tre and Bub was like, you three, me and Bags, and we'll just go get it and then they'll get back to start the transition because I think for a small part of the second quarter they were getting out in transition a lot.

Yeah, really just go in there and hit them and go get the boards, to be honest.

**Q. You've always been good at rebounding, but if you look at your rebound rate, you're getting better and better year after year. Why do you think you continue to improve at that?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I mean, to be honest, I just tell myself, go get it. If there's food on the table, I'm not going to be the one to let it just sit there. I try to go out there and just -- anyway I can help the team, I help them, and right now it's rebounding, so I'm going to continue to do that for them.

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**Q. How would you compare where you're at now to just a couple months ago at the beginning of the season when you were more so fighting for minutes?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, I'm definitely feeling more confident, feeling more comfortable playing out there, getting back in a rhythm, getting back in a flow, and just trying to find more ways to impact the game, to be honest. I know my rebounding is the biggest thing right now, trying to just run into more peel screens, rock and rolls, get to the rim, shoot the open ones, try to just find the flow of the game for myself and be there for my teammates pretty much.

**Q. How have you seen this team get better over the past seven games compared to the beginning of the season?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think we've put like a large emphasis on our defense. I think our defense is pretty tough. I think that we're taking more pride in going out there and throwing the first punch rather than taking it, and our togetherness has become more -- as the season has gone on, we kind of know who does what and what's doing who, and we're just playing to our strengths. Everybody knows what their strength is, and we're continuing to play to it.

**Q. With Coulibaly and Sarr in the lineup together, how would you say overall that affects everything?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I mean, they're two defensive menaces if you ask me. Sarr down there blocking shots, BC on the ball definitely raises the level of intensity for us, and we all feed off that.

**Q. Going back to that bench unit that finishes the third and starts the fourth, it's not the largest lineup, especially with the size that Memphis can deploy. What allows you guys to play, even yourselves as you've mentioned, play bigger than you guys are but put yourselves in positions to try and find advantages, especially when you have to score?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Can you repeat that one again? My bad. I kind of lost it.

**Q. You're good. With the size difference that that second unit stretch has, with the size that they can deploy, how do you guys play bigger than you are, especially knowing you have to put offense on the board, as well, not just relying on defense?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think it's tough playing bigger than -- for me it's tough playing bigger than what I am, but I

think it's just like a mindset, it's just shifting your mindset where you know you're not the biggest or strongest person on the court, and we all know that. That second unit is pretty small outside of Bags. It's just a mindset; go in there and go fight. We can't be the unit to go in there and let the game loose, like give it up pretty much. We always tell each other when we get in here, we've got to get in here and bring that fight and bring that dawg with us. I pride myself on bringing that.

I think as a unit, we do a pretty good job at going in there and throwing that first punch, especially with that second unit.

**Q. A theoretical question, but if everybody knows that you can get minutes in the NBA by playing defense and that defense helps win games, why is it so hard, especially for young guys, to lean into playing defense?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think for young guys coming out of college, it's probably more hard because they're coming from a situation where they were the man, or like they were relied on to score a lot, and the NBA is a completely different game. You've got guys on the other side of the ball that can go get 40, 50 points if they really want to.

It's tough when you're young. I went through that when I was young, when I was in Toronto or whatever. But it's just a mindset shift. Once you figure it out and know if I can do this out there, I'll get more minutes, and then my game can open up completely, I think guys would get it quicker for sure.

**Q. What turned the light on for you in Toronto?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I had a few setbacks in my career, so that pretty much kind of turned the light on for me in that every day is not given; it's earned. When I get in the game, it's like, do I want to go back or do I want to stay where I'm at, and that's just my thought process of I'm not giving nothing that I earned, I'm not giving it back. I'm just going to go out there and play my hardest every single day.

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