

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Will Dawkins

Trae Young

Media Conference



WILL DAWKINS: Good to see you tonight. Today is a very exciting day for basketball fans. As an organization, Trae, we want to officially welcome you here to DC.

You guys have all seen it, seen him playing basketball. He plays an exciting brand of basketball that we're looking forward to seeing here. He just plays with a level of confidence, a level of competitiveness that we feel like we'd like to add. It's what sets him apart when you watch him play against the other guards in the league. Happy to have him here.

Trae has been a force since he got in the league, day one, rookie year. He evolved into one of the best, elite, proven play-makers. That's something that we're going to be continuing to look for while he's here.

I know the front office, the evaluators, we feel extremely strongly about his ability to amplify the young talent that we have, the young talent that we're going to keep adding to the team as we go through the player development process that we're going to stick to here in DC.

We had dinner last night. Even though he's entering the beginning of his prime, he's got a lot of basketball left in him. He has a lot of goals and aspirations that he wants to reach. We're here to help him do that, continue his player development process. As you guys know, that's our motto. You come here, you get better, you work on your game. He is going to continue to do that, while amplifying others.

Again, we're excited to add to the rebuild of the organization.

I do want to pause for one second because I do think it's important to acknowledge that there's two sides to every trade. I do want to recognize that for a second and say thank you to Corey Kispert, ultimate professional.

When Michael and I first got here, he was one of the few

guys that was able to stay because he understood who he was as a human, who he was as a worker, professional. He left this place better. I want to thank him, his wife and his family for his time in DC.

CJ's time was a little shorter, but he still had a significant impact in how he led, taught our young guys, left this place better.

We wish them both well and want to say thank you to them.

Michael and I got here two-and-a-half seasons ago I guess it is now. We're still on the road to rebuilding the team. We wanted to emphasize a few things:

The importance on remaining flexible throughout the rebuild, the importance of thinking in layers, stacking things up. I would say being flexible, being opportunistic, doing that while finding players that fit towards our long-term vision with the same success.

I think looking back on the trade made today, that reflects well on all those principles. Trae aligns with what we are trying to do. We're happy to have him here in DC.

I have seen him in so many different jerseys, starting with North Norman High School, Mokaan AAU, McDonald's Hoop Summer with the 'USA' on his chest, Boomer Sooner OU, to his professional career. I'm excited the next jersey he's going to be wearing will be one of the Washington Wizards.

I'll open it up for questions and officially welcome Trae to DC.

Q. You were said to want to be here more than any other team. Why is that? What was it about this situation and city that made you want to be here?

TRAE YOUNG: I think there was a lot of factors. I think for me, there's a lot of different, like, directions I could have went as far as my goals and what I want my legacy to be at the end of the day.



For me, like, just being able to have an impact on my teammates and people around me, I feel like I did a good job of that as a young player in Atlanta.

So being able to be a vet and doing it with these young guys here, I feel like I have more experience, more things that I can give these young guys. I'm just super excited.

This is for me, like DC is overlooked as far as a big market. In the NBA I feel like this is a big market. I just feel like I'm being able to come into an opportunity to be myself. I'm around people that obviously have known me for a long time, known the type of person I am, the type of winner I want to be.

I know it's a day-by-day process. I know what it takes. It's not going to be easy. But I know this is a place that I'm excited about and I was excited about whenever I heard it could be a possibility.

Q. Aside from the availability, what made this the right time in your rebuild to try to make a move like this? Did the improvement in the last few weeks play a role?

WILL DAWKINS: I think as an organization, we have a long-term plan. We're not going to do anything that deviates from that, as I kind of explained earlier. Trae fits into what we are trying to do, based on the development a lot of the other players and how he's going to help amplify them.

We're always going to be, like I said, opportunistic. When you have a four-time All-Star, all-NBA player available who wants to come to DC and help make it what we want to be, it was an easy partnership and an easy decision, to be honest with you.

Q. You are a proven high-caliber player, four-time All-Star. With criticism coming from everywhere nowadays, how do you manage the outside noise?

TRAE YOUNG: Now I'm comfortable in my skin. I know who I am. Like, I know the people that are really around me every day. They know who I am. Whatever stuff comes out, I mean, there's so many fake things that come out, I just let slide.

I know the people around me really understand it, and I know one day when I do ultimately win, like we all do here, all that negativity will flip and be positive and stuff. Stuff like that wouldn't even come out and even be brought up.

For me, I'm a big believer in faith. I believe everything happens for a reason. I'm just riding that wave. I know sometimes you got to go down to get up. For me, I

sometimes let things slide. I deal with it because I know who I am.

Q. Trae, have you had a chance to interact with your new teammates yet?

TRAE YOUNG: Yes.

Q. What have the conversations been like so far?

TRAE YOUNG: I definitely have. This morning I got to shoot around. It was exciting. It was exciting. I was looking forward to it. I thought I'd see them yesterday, but I heard Khris had some stuff going on. They couldn't see me yesterday when I toured the arena.

Going to shootaround this morning, seeing Alex Sarr, I told Bilal he got me a couple times these last few years. I'm glad I'm on his side now. We can work together on trying to get some other guys (smiling).

But it's cool. There's so many young guys here. They're so mature, too. As young as they are, you can see the maturity, the want to learn. Some of the them have already been asking me questions. They're sponges, they're gym rats.

To piggyback off CJ, like hearing him talk about the organization earlier this season, I mean, that was a big viral thing about how this is all changing around here.

I think, I mean, for me just being here this past 24 hours, you can tell this is a lot different than what people from the outside see.

WILL DAWKINS: One thing I'll add on that. The conversations we've had about basketball, about the team, he obviously processes at a very high speed and knows the game. But he's a junky of the game and watches it.

He already knows the idiosyncrasies of some of our guys, what they can and can't do, where they are going to be going. He walked in with a knowledge playing against these guys, but with a healthy respect for them, too, where he's going to be able to pick up right away. It is going to be good.

Q. You had a taste of a Playoff run earlier in your career. How did that impact the rest of the guys in the locker room?

TRAE YOUNG: For me, it can help a lot. I played with a guy like Lou Will, that was his deepest run, who played 18 seasons in the NBA. I understand how hard it is to even get to that point.

So for these young guys, I think just understanding it's a day-by-day process. You can't skip steps. You can't look too far ahead. You got to focus on each and every day, focus on how you can get better.

Just from being around here, the short time that I have been, that's the focus around here. I love that. That's how I've been raised and grew up thinking, that's how I will be able to be in this position today. That's why I'm glad to be here.

Q. You being a true point guard on the floor with the Wizards' young core already intact, how do you feel you can mesh on the floor with them and how can you help guys like Bub Carrington, Kyshawn George, Bilal Coulibaly, Alex Sarr? How can you help them get better?

TRAE YOUNG: Man, for me, one of the my favorite players growing up was Steve Nash and Chris Paul, as well. For me, I always learned that the ball brings energy, gives energy. That's why I love passing.

I know as soon as I run a pick-and-roll with Alex, get him a dropoff with a dunk or a lob. I see Bilal cutting, he gets the ball, and he's not cutting just to cut. I mean, that builds chemistry, that builds trust.

They got to know I give effort on the other end, too. They're going to see that. That's how you build trust with your teammates.

That's just something, I mean, it will happen over time as we play with each other. We just got to continue to get those reps up.

Q. Obviously you and everyone in the NBA wants to win a title one day. When you look at this Wizards team, what kind of potential do you see in this roster with you teaming up with them, whatever Will and Michael want to build going forward to get to that point? Is that a big part of why you came here?

TRAE YOUNG: Of course. Of course. You don't want to go somewhere and expect to lose your whole time there.

For me, I understand where we're at right now and where we want to go. For me, like I said over and over again, may sound like a broken record, but this is a day-by-day process, including the summertime.

I can't wait to bring those guys out to L.A. to work out with me this summer. You know what I'm saying? I've been working out there every summer. I usually bring

teammates out there. There is a lot of young guys, so I can really really bring them out there and make sure we get some work in and runs, build that chemistry that way.

That's a day-by-day process for me. I don't want to look too far ahead or set expectations on when this will happen. You never know. It happened faster than I expected in my last place. You never know when it can happen.

If you focus on the daily stuff, things are going to work out.

Q. You mentioned before that things are different in this organization than they were maybe recently. What are you seeing from management, ownership, coaching, infrastructure, that leads you to believe this is different now?

TRAE YOUNG: I mean, you hit all the bullet points. I mean, they've been here for a few years now. I mean, just being able to watch from afar, some of the pieces that they've gotten since they've been here, the headaches I've had these last couple times playing against them. You kind of see the difference and feel the difference from the way they play.

I know a lot of the guys on the coaching staff, even some of them back in OKC when I was a kid. When it comes to trust, you have to be able to trust the people around you, know who you are.

I mean, everything about this place... They're talking about the arena, the lower part. Everything that is new right now, it's ridiculous. I can't wait till it's fully finished in a couple years.

No, I mean, it's on its way up. I hope I'm a piece of this puzzle on the way with it.

Q. You were a young guy in Atlanta when they took a big jump. What drives winning when you are young and you don't really know how to win in this league? How do you get to that level where winning is a constant and expected?

TRAE YOUNG: I mean, it's not easy. Especially as a young team, like, it's easy as a young player to come into this league and focus on yourself and how to get to that next deal, next whatever, because it's new, it's a dream come true.

I've had experience and can tell you, trust me, if you win, everything else is going to take care of itself. That was the type of teams that have those young guys that are able to win at an early age or even faster than expected because they're just more mature and they understand no matter

what you do, I mean, if you're a part of that winning team, you're going to breed success, whether it's there or somewhere else. You can expand.

I think that's having great vets. You never know what can happen if you have those type of vets around.

Q. It's been a while since you put on a new team's jersey for the first time, wore a team's colors. Could you walk us through what that moment was like.

TRAE YOUNG: It was surreal. I mean, different. It was special. Like, it's going to feel even more real the first time I put it on and walk out there, walk out that tunnel, right behind the bench. I mean, I'll be able to really feel what it's like.

But today, it was just something new. I'm just embracing everything about this place, this moment so far. I'm just enjoying it all. It felt amazing.

WILL DAWKINS: Any significance behind switching to 3?

TRAE YOUNG: That was my freshman year of high school number. It was the first one right before I changed it to 11 (smiling). Turning it back.

WILL DAWKINS: Back to the beginning.

TRAE YOUNG: Back to the beginning (smiling).

Q. How do you reflect back on your time in Atlanta?

TRAE YOUNG: Oh, man, I loved it. I enjoyed it. For me, going there as a 19-, 20-year-old, it was a dream come true being able to be drafted there. I have nothing but love and respect to the Ressler family. It was kind of their beginning of being in Atlanta, too. Going in there at the same time with them, it was a dream come true.

I'm happy that I had that. I feel like I needed that to be where I'm at today. Going forward, I think that everything I learned there is just going to make me the better player and the better person I need to be for this organization going forward.

I'm just so thankful for my time there. But I'm excited about this next one.

Q. This is a fan base that has been starving for a talent such as yourself for years and years now. They're excited that you're here. What does it mean to you to already have the District behind you before you even step on the court?

TRAE YOUNG: Oh man, it means a lot. It means a lot to have a lot of the fan base here showing support, showing love. I want people to continue to show love, not only to me but to my teammates and this team for the rest of the season and going forward.

I walked into the arena yesterday. I was telling Will how I want to see this place sold out. I remember seeing this place, about to retire John Wall's jersey. Just seeing it as a kid packed out. I want to get it back to that. You know what I'm saying?

It's not going to be just me, it's going to be this team and everybody that's a part of it. I'm super excited to have this feeling.

I'm glad the fan base is excited. We going to give them something to be excited about going forward. That's on us to take these day-by-day habits and put them out there.

Q. Will, you mentioned knowing him and seeing him from an early age. Can you expand on that, how you've seen him progress over the years.

WILL DAWKINS: Oh, wow. Probably saw him coming to one of our games when he was like 12, 13 years old. People are like, Hey, he's a young talent.

There's a lot of ties there being in Oklahoma City. It's a small town. He's from Norman. My wife is from Norman. Her whole family lives there. He went to OU. My wife's family works at OU, went to OU. Known him for a very long time.

When you are in a city like that, you have Player of the Year-type candidates in high school and college, it is very easy to see him.

You see him in the different gyms, you know his family, you know what he's about, you know the fiber that he comes from.

Always kept in touch with the family, kept in touch with him once he became a professional player watching through the ranks.

I think the other thing, having Travis Schlenk, who drafted him, one of our head VP decision makers on the evaluation space. The connectivity they had. It made it a lot easier when you're doing background research to know you know people who truly know his family and the truly know the kid. You don't have to listen to some of the rumors you guys were talking about. It made us feel even more comfortable.

He's a guy that was always in the gym. Every time you would go to OU practice, even when he wasn't going to OU yet, was taking other offers, he was in there working. You would be like, Who is that kid? He is just a basketball junkie. That's how he leads and speaks.

To his credit, when I went to his OU practice, he would have his little brother in there. His little brother would be working. Now he's becoming a player in high school in OKC.

It's a special family. He's a special person. He's not longer a kid anymore. He's kind of grown up. He's all about basketball, he is all about family, he is all about his faith.

For me, it was an easy one to just reconnect and tap back in and bring him to DC.

Q. Where are you at in the process of getting back on the court, being able to play for the Wizards this season?

TRAE YOUNG: I mean, I've been playing through some injuries this year obviously. I mean, coming over here doing these physicals, they want to make sure I'm right and things like that. Obviously I've been playing through some stuff early on.

I just got to leave it up to them. Obviously they want to make sure I'm right. I do, too. I don't want to come back and not be myself for this team, for this city.

I'll just leave it up to them to make sure they let you know when I'm coming back. Hopefully soon.

Q. Earlier you mentioned having more goals that you want to accomplish. You spoke about legacy. At this point in your career, what are some of those goals and what do you want your legacy to be?

TRAE YOUNG: Yeah, I mean, that's a great question.

My goals? I think for me, I just want to continue - sound like a broken record - but I just want to get better each and every day. I know I'm not a finished product. I know people look at me as a finished product sometimes. I don't know, I don't have the baby face. Maybe I need to go back to it.

I got so much to improve on the court, off the court. I feel like I've gotten so much better.

But my goals? I just want to bring the best out of these young guys as far as on the court. When I'm able to be right, get on the court, I mean, show that I can bring the

best out of this team and these young guys that I'm around. Hopefully make an All-Star out of some of these other guys. That's my goal for this.

My legacy has probably nothing to do with basketball. It's more about the kids that I'm around, the kids that I inspire back even in Atlanta. That was probably one of the hardest things, like, just some of the parents that have to tell their kids that I'm gone. They don't really understand that this is basketball, this is a business. Sometimes players have to leave.

That's part of my legacy. I want to leave that same type of legacy in DC. I'll be out in the community, summertime, holidays. I'll be around. That's what I want my legacy to be. It's more than basketball.

WILL DAWKINS: Thank you, everyone.

TRAE YOUNG: Got you. Thank you.

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