

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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## Will Dawkins

Media Conference



**Q. First of all, do you anticipate that AD will at some point play the season, the rest of the season, or not?**

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I do. Had a good visit with Anthony yesterday, got to take him to dinner. Spent some time doing a tour of the facility, going to practice facility, arena.

The plan for AD right now is to go back to Dallas and finish his rehab. He has a really good team down there. Our doctors met with them, and our medical staff is going to go down with him. So we want to keep that good thing going that he has.

During All-Star break, he takes another visit with a doctor. That's a good point for us to see where his progress is at. After that, after All-Star break, he'll return to D.C. and be here with us.

**Q. Is he still on -- the initial return to play with the hand was six weeks, so March?**

WILL DAWKINS: I think it was a six- to ten-week type thing, diagnosis. We'll get a better feel for it this weekend.

**Q. So he'll be back, but obviously not playing?**

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, he'll start his rehab, continue his rehab in his program with the people down in Dallas, and then we'll kind of oversee and be around it and kind of have him here for a little bit as well. We'll know more after All-Star break when he sees the doctor.

**Q. I'm curious, which side of the trade was the first person to make contact? Was it Washington saying we want to go out and get a superstar, or was Dallas saying this guy is available?**

WILL DAWKINS: I think with any trade deadline you're having communication with all teams pretty consistently. Unlike the Draft where it's one finite day, one finite time, with the trade deadline, you can do it all month leading

into.

We contact every team. We normally talk to different people within departments. We've been talking for a long time with every team in the league, and you have conversations about different players, and it morphs into another player, different concepts. People make other trades and want to balance their books financially. You're always checking in all the time, and there's continuous dialogue with every team in the league.

**Q. With Anthony coming here, how do you think he'll coincide with other players on the team, specifically Alex Sarr, how you plan to deploy him in the development aspect of Alex's game?**

WILL DAWKINS: Very well. You probably saw the excitement on my face when you asked that question. AD is a special player, a special talent. He obviously opens up so much on offense because he demands double-teams, can score in different areas. Defensively he's been an anchor, rebounder, rim protector.

When you have him at the 4 and Alex at the 5 protecting the paint, Bilal, Kyshawn, Jamir, some of our elite wing defenders out there, like we want to be long, we want to be athletic, we want to be able to protect the paint better than we have. I think having someone like him opens up the game to a lot of our other players but also allows him to be Anthony Davis too.

**Q. What do you think this trade in the past couple months, the moves can tell, what do you think the fans are going to take from these trades? What is the organization telling the fans when you make moves like this?**

WILL DAWKINS: I think Michael sat up here in this room probably a little bit earlier in the month or last month and talked about kind of the next phase for Wizards basketball, and I think we're starting to enter that.

When we first got here, we assessed where we're at, and we made a difficult decision and one we thought was the



right decision, to start to rebuild, and that first phase was the deconstruction process. I think we can tell the fans we're towards the end of that.

We're laying some foundational chips through a lot of the players we've drafted, and now we're starting to build because we kind of have a better feel for those young players, what they're about and kind of how they fit so we can go out and add other pieces like Trae Young, Anthony Davis, to start building something.

So I think that's what I can tell our fans. We're not all in. This isn't a push go, everybody go move. This is the next step in our player development process and the next step to play more competitive basketball because, as many of you guys know, we want to be in those competitive games in the regular season and let those guys grow and learn from those experiences. I think that's the next step for us, and I think that's why we did these moves.

**Q. How do you think AD and Trae Young will coincide on the court?**

WILL DAWKINS: Very well would be my guess. Trae probably has never played with a player to the level of Anthony Davis while also leading the league in assists, in assist percentage for how many years now? So you add a player like that at the rim, pick-and-roll, two-man game, that opens it up.

Again, Anthony Davis surrounding him with the level of shoes that we have with Bub and Trae -- Trae, Will, all of these guys shooting the ball, Kyshawn, Alex, I think the floor is going to be spread. We have a lot of people who can make decisions, and that's how we want to play basketball.

So it won't be one person dominating the ball. That's not what we want. Again, adding these guys positionally made a lot of sense.

**Q. I'm curious the conversations ahead of the deadline, once you guys make moves, just getting these young guys prepared for the business side of this?**

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, trade deadline is always difficult because you build unique bonds with the people in the room, and there's a connectivity that I don't think everyone realizes. When you want to be about -- people use the word culture. I typically use environment.

You invest in your brothers in that locker room, like it's difficult when you see people like Marvin, people like Khris. Those guys have been with our organization for two years

now and like have really helped them grow. It's hard to see that, but at the end of the day, they do realize it's a business and they do realize we're doing our best to amplify them, to amplify the team, and we have to make the tough decisions.

You try to give them as much heads up as possible. We don't know what's going to happen that week. We just try to do our best to prepare and make sure the coaches are ready and they understand it because they're the ones that have to have those conversations in the moment while we're still in the room.

We do a good job of letting our team know before it goes public in the event we can and explaining the why afterwards.

**Q. After the Pistons game, Sharife mentioned AG and Trae Young being the guys who made comments before that game to just get guys settled and ready. Knowing that you made a move for Trae just weeks before that and he was already willing to step in in that veteran role in the locker room, what does that say about the type of environment that you're building and want to continue to build?**

WILL DAWKINS: I think AG is a staple and has been that for us for a long time, and that's who Trae Young wants to be, and that's who he is, and I think he wants to show that not to the media, but to his teammates. I think you guys are seeing it in those different situations.

The game before, you saw the nerves. You saw everybody thinking what could happen, and once the trade kind of happened, they level-setted. I was talking to Coach Keith, and he said before the game, he's like, I walked in, and these guys are ready tonight. People have took a deep breath. They're ready to go. We'll see a good effort out of these guys tonight, and I think we saw that that night.

**Q. One of the things that has been reported around AD and his time in Dallas is that he wants a new contract, and his agent had been pretty adamant about that. Have you guys had any conversations with Anthony Davis' agent about a possible contract extension, and what would that look like?**

WILL DAWKINS: We haven't had any conversations about that. That's something you can't even talk about until the summertime. Rich Paul, myself, Michael Winger, we have a good relationship and good rapport. When it comes time to have those conversations, I'm sure we will.

The most important thing is getting him healthy and then



getting him on the floor so he can play with his teammates and get to learn them.

**Q. As you watch the improvement of all the young players, Will Riley as of late has jumped off the charts a little bit. His acumen, did you guys know about his acumen to score at such a young age? Just your thoughts on what you've seen with the way he plays? Because to me it's really rare to see a 19-year-old play the way he does.**

WILL DAWKINS: Appreciate you asking about Will. I think at the beginning of the season we talked about having a lot of depth at the wing and not being able to see everybody at the beginning of the year, and people still working and developing and waiting for their opportunity and being ready.

I think with Will Riley we did a good job, and it's a good example of staying ready with the go-go, playing those meaningful games and getting those reps and building his confidence.

To ask did I know it was going to happen this fast and know the type of player he could be with the IQ and the decision-making? Yes. But less about me and more about our environment and our group of scouts and our evaluators. They saw him at UIBL -- Dickey Simpkins, Steve Cook, they're out there, Amber, they go all the time. So we're watching these players at a younger age, and we saw Will with the ball in his hands.

Now he's growing and building more confidence, and I think he'll have a huge jump this summer physically but also basketball-wise. So seeing him, seeing Jamir, Tristan, Sharife, those guys get their opportunities to compete with first line guys, that's what this year is all about for us, like full roster development and trying to answer as many questions as we can on who's going to move forward with us after this year.

**Q. Is there any more update or details on Trae Young's timeline to return?**

WILL DAWKINS: Not right now because Trae is going to be reassessed during All-Star break as well, and coming out of there, hopefully we'll have an update for everyone. He's on timeline. He's still working on the court. He's starting to do a little one-on-one. Starting to do a little more two-on-two where you get light contact. He's playing with the coaches, so he's trending in a positive direction.

Again, it's about getting healthy, getting fully all the way there. When you play hard one day, making sure your body can recover for the next night. Again, we want to

make sure he's 100 percent healthy before we put him out there.

**Q. How do you expect offensive roles to change with the young guys now that you are incorporating Trae and Anthony Davis, maybe guys who are used to playing on the ball?**

WILL DAWKINS: Again, we want our guys to process information really fast and be able to make decisions with the ball, and that's what we've drafted, and I think you can see that's what we've traded for as well. The way we want to build our team, everyone eats, and that's kind of a goal.

I don't see too much of a shift just in terms of how we want to play stylistically, and I think those guys will be able to be amplified by Anthony and Trae but also help their games as well.

Our guys are building confidence. I think I said it, we'll know when to kind of take that next step, like you asked. If you watch Kyshawn, Bilal, Alex, even Trae, Bub, like those guys have given us enough answers to the test that we're ready to add positionally what we felt were holes.

If you could tell me at the beginning of the year we're going to add a point guard and a power forward and they're going to be Anthony Davis and Trae Young, I'd feel pretty good about filling those holes.

**Q. What is something that you think Anthony Davis can teach Alex Sarr defensively?**

WILL DAWKINS: I'm not that caliber of player. I wasn't even close. I think those guys will have a lot of connectivity on just vocality, like Alex seeing plays earlier, calling it out, knowing when to switch, knowing personnel on how to guard people, when to send them this way, things of that nature. But I think they'll learn how to play on a string.

I've been telling Alex for a long time like go protect the rim, and he's obviously elite at that. We'll find somebody to help clean up your man and help you rebound as well. He's done a really good job of improving his defensive rim percentage, blocks but also rebounding, and now you know you have another force that will allow you to go get it.

I think he probably helps our wing defenders more so than Alex because those guys can get to the ball now and really pressure, and to send them into the Alex-AD combination at the rim, so I think it helps everybody defensively, but I expect that tandem to be at a high level.

**Q. You also got D'Angelo Russell in the trade. What**

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**was your thought process in trying to loop him in, and what do you anticipate in the short term with him?**

WILL DAWKINS: I appreciate you asking on that one. Obviously in that trade, we brought back four players. We waived Dante Exum earlier today. He's going to rehab and get healthy on his own.

With Hardy, he just got in today, so you guys will at least see him out there on the bench. He's not going to play but excited to have another young scoring athlete in the mix with our young guys. We'll see him play a little bit towards the end of the season.

With D'Angelo, we've talked to him, talked to his representatives. At the time he's not going to report until we figure out what's best for him and us and our future.

**Q. When did the discussions with Dallas go from theoretical to likely possible?**

WILL DAWKINS: It was quick. It was definitely quick. I don't remember the day or the time on it, but it moved pretty fast for a trade of that magnitude.

**Q. And how did it come together? This is a pretty big name. How did that come together?**

WILL DAWKINS: Mike Winger's, as you guys know, impressive when it comes to team management strategy, negotiating. We follow his lead and try to make sure we're prepared for anything that could happen. I really like the staff that we put together and our strategy group, our research group, our analytics group -- like having everybody in the room.

We met on these things two, three months ago, and what it would take, what it would look like. There's always two teams in a deal. So you've got to figure out what's most important to them, what would kind of interest them, and what's your angle? I think the most important thing for us is we established what positions we want to go after. We built ourselves a lot of flexibility so we could do it in summertime or at the trade deadline.

When we tried to forecast the summer, this option was better. When you meet at the beginning of the trade deadline process, you're like these are the things we're willing to use to improve our team, and we didn't go above that. We retained all of our own staff. We retained all of our young core nucleus of players.

So what we're shopping with, let's go for the biggest names we can, and I just think we were fortunate to be able to do that because of the financial flexibility we afforded

ourselves with the few moves we did before that.

**Q. How does this move affect you guys in free agency and the draft going forward in terms of player personnel and movement and contracts?**

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I don't know yet because I kind of want to see the team together. The one thing I will say is I was a benefit of being around experienced people when I was growing up in the NBA, and it's something we've always wanted to do with our players.

I think year 1 you saw Tyus Jones and Danilo Gallinari around our guys. Year 2 was Malcolm Brogdon, Marcus Smart, and Jonas Valanciunas. We always had those guys next to them. And this year obviously Khris and CJ crushed it just in terms of who they are as people and teaching them.

We've always had veteran players around our guys, and now we've just stepped up the level they can be amplified by the players on the court as well. So adding Trae Young and Anthony Davis, we want to see those guys together with our young core, that's going to be the core that carries us forward, and see how they blend and they mix and build some chemistry towards the end of the year and into the summer and obviously before the beginning of next season.

We still have a little bit of flexibility to add to the team in the summer, and hopefully the lottery gods have our favor, and we can add another high level talent in June as well. That's kind of the plan for now.

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