

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

Wednesday, February 11, 2026  
Washington, DC, USA

## Coach Brian Keefe

Media Conference



Cavaliers 138, Wizards 113

**Q. Obviously Sam Merrill had a great game shooting-wise. You guys did get hands contesting a lot of the threes after the first couple that he took. Aside from him, what else do you feel like kind of allowed you guys to dig a little bit of that hole that you kept trying to get yourselves out of?**

BRIAN KEEFE: The start. The start, I think they shot like 90 percent until some point, probably like the five-minute mark. You can't let guys get going like that. Then we fell quite a bit, too; we got to learn some hard lessons, some of these guys.

After that, we picked it up, cut it, obviously, to I believe five in the third. I liked our fight and our competitiveness, and our guys really responded to that, but it was the start that really hurt us.

**Q. What do you think was the shift for them, because it seemed like it was, like, the 5:00, 4:00 mark of the first quarter where then you started to see the fight come out of them. Was it something you said in a huddle? Was it just they figured it out and kind of buckled down?**

BRIAN KEEFE: I give the guys credit. They figured it out. I wanted them to find some solutions tonight, and I thought they really did that themselves.

We kind of challenged them a little bit in a time-out. But give the guys credit; they wanted to make this more competitive, and they certainly did that, and we starting turning them over and getting more physical, and that turned the game more in direction. But the start is really important, and we didn't have a great start.

**Q. What did you like from your bench tonight? They were a nice pop off of the bench and gave you guys nice energy.**

BRIAN KEEFE: AG gives us what he always gives us, that energy, heart and soul. J.C., same thing, Jaden Hardy, Sharife, Will Riley. I thought everybody came in and contributed. First time seeing Jaden; I thought he was terrific out there tonight.

Again, good consistency for three quarters, but the first quarter was frustrating.

**Q. I know it's tough for a player to come in in a trade not knowing the system; everybody kind of runs similar things but verbiage is different. How did you think Jaden was able to just go and play basketball and the teammates helped him out?**

BRIAN KEEFE: Yeah, we just told him -- his teammates were great. He's done a lot of work preparing the last day and a half with us. I just told him to be aggressive. If you're going to make mistakes, make them with energy and effort. We can live with those things. But I thought he gave everything he had tonight. He'll only get better. He'll learn our system more and more, but for the first time out there...

FastScripts by ASAP Sports