

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Trae Young Media Conference



Jazz - 122, Wizards - 112

Q. How are you feeling?

TRAE YOUNG: I feel great.

Q. Glad to hear it. You only get so many chances to make a first impression with a new fan base. You've done this before in Atlanta. Can you break it down, the experience of that first game in front of an audience and how it compares to a rookie season?

TRAE YOUNG: It was very much similar as far as being anxious all day and not getting too much sleep last night. I was really looking forward to today and just coming out here and shaking off -- I mean, whatever rust I would have just from missing a few months of basketball and the speed of the game and just trying to find a rhythm with some of the guys that I've been seeing playing.

I just wanted to come out here and just have some fun and get that first one out of the way. It was a lot different, me being on minutes restriction, than my first year being a rookie playing -- I think I might have played 25, 30 minutes my first game at MSG.

I'm just happy I got this game out of the way and just got to get out here and have some fun.

Q. Basically the guys you have to play with, the guys you haven't yet gotten to play with, anyone you're excited to work with, or anyone you were excited to work with tonight?

TRAE YOUNG: Everybody. I'm looking forward to working with everybody, especially the guys that you all are accustomed to seeing on the court, a lot of the recent draft picks and all those guys. I was out there with Tre and Bub tonight. Obviously Juju had a great game, an unbelievable game. I think he set a record for rookies. For this franchise in rebounds.

That's big time. Just getting out there and taking advantage of your opportunity, that's stuff we're preaching in the locker room. It was great to get out here and play with some of the guys.

Q. How did you feel like you played? I know you are your own toughest critic still.

TRAE YOUNG: For sure. I think I played pretty good. I think I played decent. My shots were on line. I just didn't have enough legs under me. A few went in and out. I was glad my first three in the second half went in. I was mad at myself. But it was good.

One of my turnovers went into one of the coach's hands when it should have went right into Bilal's shooting pocket. He was wide open. But that's something that I'll get even more -- as the game went on, I feel like I threw a couple behind the back passes to my teammates and they were better passes.

That's just part of getting the rust off. I think I played pretty good, though, for my first one.

Q. Did you get a sense, to our perspective, there seemed to be more energy in the arena tonight. How much were you attuned to how the fans received you today?

TRAE YOUNG: I definitely felt the energy tonight. I mean, just from all the fans, every time I would sit down or be in the game or check into the game, you definitely felt it. That's what I want here. I want the fans to feel involved, to feel involved in part of our winning in the future.

Even now, being a part of the growth and be a part of the young guys getting better because this is the time that you get to see guys take the bumps and bruises and learn the game in the NBA. As the years go on, you get to kind of see the fruits of that labor. So I think it's very important that not only me as a teammate, but everybody outside the building as fans, just really dive into this team.

This is a special group, and I really believe in the potential

we've got with all the young guys and the future we've got here.

Q. Trae, it's easy enough to sit back as you knew this day was coming for about a week now, but as it got closer and closer, now that you've gone through this day, did it kind of go as you would expect for yourself and trying to get that rust off and kind of just allow yourself to be in it and just embrace whatever kind of went for today.

TRAE YOUNG: For sure. For me I didn't necessarily come into today like putting an expectation on what I would do on the court or what numbers obviously I would get. I'm playing on restriction minutes. So for me I just want to go out there and whatever minutes I'm given, just to give it all to my teammates, have some fun, allow them to kind of know how I play and like what I see and try to make the game easier for them in certain spots of the floor and stuff.

For me it's more about just getting to learn my teammates as I'm playing these games. Just trying to see how I can make their lives easier and vice versa. They're going to make my job a lot easier by finishing and being able to play a little bit more off the ball with Bub and Tre and some of those guys that are bringing the ball up and Bilal. So I'm able to play off those guys too.

It goes both ways for me being out there. I didn't have any expectation going into tonight for sure.

Q. You mentioned Juju and the game that he had. To be able to come here as quickly as he did, to get thrown into the fire the way that he did, and just play with an even keeled kind of confidence that he does, whether he is as confident as he looks out there or not, how difficult can that be for a rookie who's dealing with the type of players he's going with, especially playing in the paint?

TRAE YOUNG: Yeah, it is not easy. It's definitely not easy being thrown into the fire like this. I don't care what anybody says, every team in the NBA has some players. Every team in the NBA has players that can go off for 20, 30 points. So every night you've got to bring it.

So being thrown into the fire like he has this last week, it's been great to see. To be able to just be in his third game and having this type of night, I know he's excited and he's happy, but his teammates are just as excited and happy for him as well.

Hopefully he has more of these nights in the future for sure.

Q. We've seen the emotion from you on the bench with your teammates, supporting them, and the ejection the other night. So what did it mean to actually be out there with them on the court playing with them? What was that moment like when you heard your name announced, welcome to Washington, and the fans going crazy for you?

TRAE YOUNG: It was amazing. I knew I wasn't going to get ejected tonight when I was playing.

(Laughter).

I hope you all were thinking the same thing. For me, I just wanted to go out there and have some fun, bring some energy. I knew the crowd was going to be bringing energy, which they did. You could feel it from the beginning in warmups and even pregame.

I was just happy to be out there and playing, and I'm looking forward to playing some more games here and just getting to know my teammates even more. That's the main focus for me.

To your second question, getting introduced, that was like -- I mean, you get to embrace it as a rookie your first time, but going to a new city and a new place, I'm telling you, I'm living in the moment. I'm just so joyful, happy that I'm here in this situation, this city. I just look forward to having some great moments here. It's all about what we do on the court.

I can't just sit up here and talk about it on the mic, I want to actually go out there on the court and produce, and I know my teammates do too. That's my future plans here. I'm just looking forward to being a piece of the puzzle going forward.

Q. How are you feeling physically this being your first game back after only playing ten? Did your adrenaline carry you through?

TRAE YOUNG: Definitely. I feel really good, to be honest with you. I feel better than I thought I would. You could say my adrenaline is probably what's getting me through right now. I'll probably feel it a lot more tomorrow. The way we was running.

Yeah, I feel really good. I feel really good. Looking forward to the next one.

Q. I've been covering this team a long time. I don't think I've ever seen kids so excited to see a player play for the Wizards. Can you speak to that dynamic? It seems like they really respond to you.

TRAE YOUNG: Yeah, for me, that's what I play for, man. I was one of those kids. I was one of those kids that would show up 90 minutes before a game as a sixth, seventh, eighth grader going to Thunder games and being there 90 minutes watching my favorite players warm up. I wouldn't be in the tunnel waiting for their autograph because I was never like that, but I was always admiring those guys.

Like I would see how those guys stand in the national anthem. So a lot of the stuff I do, like pregame warmups to everything, is kind of stolen from a lot of the different guys that I was going to the game and seeing when I was a kid. For me, being in this position, that's the most important thing for me is to be able to have a similar type of impact to the next generation, to these kids.

Every now and then, I may hear a group of five or six kids scream my name, and I may turn around and give them a wave or something, and that may go a long way to them in their lives. I just remember for me being that same kid. I just wanted to say hi to my favorite player or get to know him or joke with him for a second. That's definitely a great feeling, and I look forward to seeing a lot more kids here in this arena.

Q. Speaking of kids, Tre Johnson, you guys seem to have some quick chemistry. What are your first impressions of playing with him?

TRAE YOUNG: Tre is an unbelievable player. I know a lot of people may think he's just a shooter, but he does more than just shoot. He can create, and he can make plays for others. I mean, he can drive the ball too.

For me, I'm learning these guys, and they're getting to learn me too. I feel like there's going to be times that they have some oh shit moments like when I'm wide open and they're like, they get the ball when they're not expecting it. They got to play 20 minutes with me tonight. So this is just a little taste of what we get to do these next games coming up, like just being able to figure out each other and how we like to play on the court.

Just like I said, just building it day by day so the future is bright.

Q. A couple weeks ago, Bilal mentioned that you and AD were talking to them about what the playoffs were like and that it got them excited for what the future could hold. Why did you think that was an important conversation to have?

TRAE YOUNG: It's very important to have to these young guys here now, just understanding the position we're in right now and what we're going through right now, and not

to feel comfortable in this, you know what I'm saying? Understand what we're doing right now and the focus is to get better each and every day.

Not necessarily focused on the result, it's about the grind and the practices and the film studies and making sure we get better each and every day so that in the future we are playing in the playoffs. I mean, everybody here is coming back and selling out and we're all wearing one color shirt in the arena. Those playoff games, those playoff moments, that's what we all live for.

We were kind of just talking about it in the locker room a little bit. That's just something to give them some motivation too to focus on the small things right now because those pay off in the end.

Q. You had to come in and lift the team in Atlanta, lift a franchise that had been kind of on the down. I just wonder what did you tap into during that process that you think you can also use while you're here?

TRAE YOUNG: I think for me coming in here now, I have more experience than obviously when I was a rookie going in. I was kind of looking for that kind of shoulder to lean on or that older vet to get advice from to take that next step.

So for me coming into this situation, I'm that vet that's been there. I haven't won a championship or been to the finals, but I've gotten two games away from it. So I know what it takes to get there. For me, it's trying to get further here. I know you can't just do it overnight.

That's why I love it here right now. That's what we're preaching is the daily habits and making sure that you're getting better each and every day, whether you're in the gym or not, you can get better, and whether it's your body or your mind. Those daily habits are going to carry on to having us hopefully have a long-term success.

I think that's the main thing for me is just understanding that it's not an overnight thing and that I can use my voice to help these young guys understand that too, and we'll get the results we want.

Q. We spoke about the young-uns being in the building admiring you. For the young person watching this game right now, watching this post-game right now, what's some advice you can share to help them stay on the right path and also to achieve high goals such as yourself?

TRAE YOUNG: As far as basketball?

Q. Yes.



TRAE YOUNG: I think the main thing for me when I was a kid growing up, it was just like making sure, one, you're a humble person. Like I feel like everything comes back to you. If you do things the right way, you make sure that you -- I mean, you listen to the people that have been there before you. I think that's the one thing that kids can get lost in. They think they know it all.

Me growing up, I never thought that. I always knew that other people, older adults have been there, done that before me. For me, I'm always a person that likes to ask questions. So I think that's the main thing. You ask questions, understand you don't know it all, and just focus on trying to be a great person, and everything else is going to take care of itself.

Q. Congratulations on the first game. You talked very extensively about being up against Bilal plenty of times. How reassuring does it feel to actually be on the same side with his defensive ability?

TRAE YOUNG: For sure, for sure. It's great, to be honest with you. I don't have to look at him when I'm coming here for the scouting report and all that, I get Bilal guarding me.

I'm looking forward to playing more minutes with him. Obviously I only got 20 tonight, but I think the few moments we did, whether it's finding him in the corner for threes. I know he likes to cut a lot. I know sometimes guys miss him. For me, I remember throwing him a pass that he cut and it got tipped out of bounds. Just him knowing that I'm looking for him can make him feel like he can cut.

We talked about that on the bench, and it's exciting. It's exciting to be able to have a player like him and all these other young guys we've been talking about. I'm looking forward to it.

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