

# Washington Wizards Media Conference

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## Justin Champagnie

Media Conference



**Q. As you reflect on this season, you said you like to dive on loose balls, things of that nature. Still at times this year it felt like you got the short end of the stick, weren't a big feature in the rotation. Were those times frustrating? What were those conversations like why those things occurred?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I don't know, man. I try not to look at those things too much. As a player, I feel like you can get lost in those kind of things. I try to hang my hat on just being ready. And whenever my number's called, just going out there and doing what I got to do for the team.

Obviously I try not to look at it too much. It is frustrating at times. Looking at the bigger picture, it's how can I still benefit the team, how can I still be a leader, impact the winning plays even if I'm not playing.

Obviously it's been an up-and-down year for me. I'm just really proud of the fact I still went out there and still was able to impact the game, kind of impact my teammates in a positive light. Try to bring positivity to every situation that I was in. So yeah.

**Q. Overall the team was statistically better with you on the floor this season. Taking that information and what you've done this season, what you plan to do in the off-season, with this organization wanting to take the next leap, why do you feel like you can be a big part of that?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: My play style. Very unselfish. Don't really need the ball to make an impact on the game. I try to hang my hat on the dirty work, defending, rebounding, blocking shots, steals, taking a hard foul when I got to take one, just kind of giving my teammates energy.

I think if I could find a way to maximize those things that I do great, I think it will benefit the team in a large way. Hopefully get us some more wins.

**Q. Despite your somewhat breakout season, you**

**spent a lot of the season on the bench. How do you think this past campaign?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Just showing I'm always ready to play. You kind of know what you're going to get from me on a night-to-night basis. Being able to be just consistent. I think that's one of the biggest things I was proud of myself for this year. Again, no matter minutes, no matter playing, not playing, game in, game out, just trying to be the most consistent that I can be for the team.

Just showing that I belong, showing that I can contribute to win.

**Q. You're one of the better defenders on the team, especially in isolation. What is the path towards this team becoming a significantly better defensive team next year?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think defense is just mindset. I think we're going to get in the lab, rep it out, rep coverages, rotations, all that good stuff. As a team if we shift our mindset to want to play defense, to want to go out there and guard guys, give guys a hard time on a night-to-night basis, I think that will really be the determining factor of us flipping that script, becoming a really defensive mindset team, yeah.

**Q. Late in the year when a player on the other team looks over to the bench to talk back, it seems like they're always looking in your direction, maybe Tricky's direction.**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Maybe Tristan as well.

**Q. Do you find yourself being a trash talker? Where does that come from? Are you trying to get in the opposing team's head?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I wouldn't call myself a trash talker. Try to just play little games within the game. Try to get guys out of their game. That's also a part of defense, finding little knicks-and-knacks that can give you the advantage at the end of the day.



To be honest, I learned a lot of it from Tristan (laughter). Yeah, I wouldn't pride myself as a trash talker. I pride myself as somebody who is willing to do mostly whatever need to be done to win the name, for sure, give us the advantage.

**Q. Speaking of Vukc and also Jamir, they both had time in the G, then they got new deals. Did you sort of help them throughout that process as somebody who had a similar arc?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, a little bit. I would say like kind of give them my input on what they should do when they're down there in the G, how they should approach it, how they should take that challenge, how they should run with it.

I commend the both of them really because their confidence never wavered going back and forth. They always on a night-to-night basis bring energy, put their best foot forward. Super happy and super proud of those guys.

Yeah, I just try to give them my little knicks-and-knacks that I went through when I was down there, how certain things helped me, how certain things didn't help me.

They just took what they took and ran with it. Super happy for them. Super proud of them.

**Q. Now that Trae Young and A.D. have been around for a little bit, how have they changed the locker room?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Just that vet leadership and that vet presence obviously raises the floor. I think we got a lot of young guys on this team. Having those two guys around who won at the highest level, been at the highest level for a while now really raises the floor for us, really helps us kind of push in the direction that we want to go.

**Q. This may come as a surprise, but we don't know Brian Keefe all that well because he refuses to talk about himself. How would you describe him to fans?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I would describe Brian Keefe as a very compassionate person, very caring guy. He puts the players first. He's always making sure that we're all good on a human level, even outside of basketball, before basketball.

Yeah, I think he's just a great dude, someone that you really want around, someone that you want in your locker room, someone that wants the best for everybody around him. He tries to push us to be the best versions of ourselves day in and day out. He really wants to see us all

succeed and make our own paths.

**Q. Anything that he's done for you that you can share?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Uhm... I think from the first day I got here, when I got to Denver, I played in Denver my first game with DC, he's been instilling confidence in me since the day I got here, letting me know, like, I know your path has always been rough, up and down, but you belong. Kind of just giving me the confidence to go out there and show that I belong. Just always reiterating to me that no matter how things are going, good game, bad game, not playing, playing, you belong in this league.

As a player, that's probably one of the only things that you want to hear from a coach, you know, is like you belong, I believe in you, so... I really appreciate him for that. He's a great dude overall, man.

**Q. I have a twin brother.**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: All right.

**Q. You and me have something in common. I know your brother is having a great year with the Spurs. I know you had an up-and-down year. Has your brother tried to give you advice, try to keep the spirits up?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: Yeah, we always give each other advice. My twin brother, man, we've been doing this for years together. When I have a bad game or a game where I didn't really play my best, he'll try to call me and be like, Listen, this is where you could be better, this is where you could maximize the way you're playing, even if you're having a poor shooting night, a bad night, still try to do X, Y and Z to lift your spirits and game up.

Vice versa, when he's having a bad night, If your shot's not falling, go rebound, do something else to impact winning.

I feel like we feed off each other, we feed off of that. He's been really helpful towards me this year. I'm excited to see him go into the Playoffs and do what he got to do.

**Q. Speaking of the Playoffs, obviously you have seen a team make that jump with the Spurs. Do you see the Wizards making that jump?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: For sure.

**Q. What do you see how that transition will come this summer?**

JUSTIN CHAMPAGNIE: I think it's a big summer for us all

obviously as a team and individually. I think we all got to put in the work on the game, our bodies, dive into the film, see what we messed up this year, see where they can be better, just put it all together.

I think it will be really fun to see how we do it. But I think if any team was capable of it, I think we're more than capable of making that jump.

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