

Washington Wizards Media Conference

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Will Dawkins Media Conference



WILL DAWKINS: Good morning, everybody. Everybody in the room and those who are watching that covered us, I do want to say thank you for covering us all season long, especially amongst the ever-changing journalistic climate I think we've felt here, especially in DC as well. I appreciate you guys for doing what you guys are doing, helping tell our players' stories.

Michael and I also want to acknowledge the consistent support that we get from Zach, Ted, the entire ownership group. We want to thank them. We thank them and appreciate them because their investment that they've made into Monumental basketball and to our facilities, it really has allowed us, our players, their families and our staff to do A-plus work because of the environment they put us in. We're grateful for that.

Definitely excited for round two of the renovations at Capital One. I think everybody started to feel that a little bit more towards the end of the season. Last year was a little more player focused. This off-season the construction will be a little bit more for the fan experience. We're excited for that to come through.

We always want to thank our players and staff for their commitment and hard work going into year three, going through year three with us here in DC.

Lastly the fans. I know I spoke to them a little bit more on my open at the beginning of the year. I can just say we feel a buzz. We feel a buzz in the city because of our fans. They've been great. For the most part they've been on board despite some of the outcomes.

I think it's a good time actually for DC. I think DC sports is in a really good place right now. I think it goes back to the college games, the NCAA games that were at Capital One. There was a lot of positive momentum in those games.

Mystics obviously just had a draft, adding three new players in the first round, six players over all. Commanders got the city going yesterday with the uniform

drop. They have the draft coming up next week.

Audi Field. The spirit getting Trinity back is big-time. The Defenders raising their banner for their championship. Even across the street, those guys over there, Paul and Coach Butera are making me feel old with what they have going over there. Obviously competitive baseball to start the season.

I think DC sports is in a good spot right now. I'm pretty sure we contributed to that buzz as well with the growth of the young players everybody saw, I think the mid-season acquisition where we're trying to go moving forward. I think it's a good time to enjoy sports in DC. I'm looking forward to doing it in our off-season.

I'll touch on our season in full here in a little bit, but I think I first want to just talk about the deconstruction phase and what that was like for us.

When Michael and I first sat down I think in this room in 2023 to talk about where we wanted to go, where we wanted to bring the team, I think we were trying to be as transparent as possible, give you guys our goals.

That was reshaped with what the Wizards logo meant to the area. It was also built towards sustaining team success. We wanted to break away from being in the middle. We felt our fans deserve that. We welcome that opportunity, and we still do.

I would say the past three seasons definitely weren't linear. They weren't always the easiest. There were some times in between there where we had to make some tough decisions along the way. We went through it with a consistency, with an intentionality and aggressiveness to stay the course.

I think you guys could see it was a little rocky, wasn't always the prettiest basketball, but I think we also had some positive returns we can look at. We think the comment we always say is from not skipping steps, staying the course.

Year one, I think we hit the ground running. Kind of had to. We prioritized really building that infrastructure that could sustain winning.

I really believe there's a difference between a winning environment or winning culture and a place that wins. I think we were building towards becoming a winning environment. We made more deposits into the former than the latter, but the goal here is to be able to do both.

Year one I think we also created our core principles, pillars, you could call them, tried to build around those. We also transformed our Player Development Program and what that looked like. I think we had some pretty good success in that.

We shuffled the deck pretty quickly pursuing flexibility, prioritizing draft picks, draft capital, and really just optionality, which led us into year two, which was probably a continuation of the deconstruction phase. There was a little bit more of a focus on enhanced discovery. Guys figured out their games, playing a different style of basketball, being experimental, trying to get ahead of where the game was going.

While doing that, we were also refining our habits and our standards. I think we were even more intentional leaning into the youth movement we were bringing in, really just maintaining that roster flexibility and that financial flexibility, which brings us into year three, which was this past season.

We entered year three with the most clarity in terms of what we were looking for in our measures, how we were going to measure our season and our players.

I think I actually used the season of opportunity early on at the beginning of the season. We were looking for that, but we were also looking for potential separation and growth and steps taken by our players that give us some answers.

I think we still had more questions than answers to start the year. Probably still do. But we prioritize the youth movement and player development still. I think if you look at it 48% of our minutes this season went to players 21 years or under, which led the league. It's actually up from what we did last year, slightly, 2% up, but a little bit more.

This year we started the youngest lineup on record in NBA history. It was at Charlotte I think the game was. It was five young guys that we drafted. It wasn't players that we don't believe in. It was five first rounders that we drafted and believe in. We had a competitive basketball game when they played. Four of those guys are rising stars and represented us at All-Star Weekend. We had three last

year. Again, we saw those guys take jumps and steps as we continue to pour into the youth movement like we do every year.

We break the season up month by month in 10-game increments. It allows you to continually update, continually strategize, kind of evaluate your own team and position yourselves to act when the right opportunities emerged.

We were decisive and acted in a way to finalize the deconstruction phase at season's end and move us into the next phase of our rebuild, which for us we believe will consist of more competitive basketball.

Before Josh asks, I will say the things we were looking at during those 10-game increments were a little bit of increased confidence in our players. It came quickly. They showed a confidence when they stepped on the floor. They became more of a connected group on and off the floor, which you guys can see them in this building just having joy for each other on the plane rides, things of that nature. You guys get to experience it a little bit in the locker room. These guys are definitely more connected on the floor and off of it.

There was a little bit more grit, a little bit more of a resilience in the group to stay in it the first part of the season. We were entering games a little bit more ready and a little bit more steady while we were out there while putting out the youngest lineups that we could.

While we were doing that, evaluating that, the front office gets together and this train is probably going to be leaving the station because these players are growing. What do we need, what do we want to add? I think it became pretty clear that we needed to add an advanced decision maker, play-maker, connector. We also needed to get some support to Alex inside.

When you think about those being the two need that you're trying to fill, you walk away with Trae Young and Anthony Davis, you feel pretty good about it. Gives you more confidence in the decision that we made to make that shift.

Heading into the off-season I would say we remain optimistic about who we are, our future, where we're going. I think it's very clear we have a lot of work to do. We are a very unproven group with a very steep climb ahead of us. But we welcome that climb. We're going to find joy in that climb.

We were very fortunate to add a top-five player to the foundation of our young core at this year's draft, then go into July and have some conversations with free agents and free agency.

The good part of about the summer is I expect everyone to be healthy. Guys are really, really close. If there's another seven to 10 days, we'd have the majority of our team out there. That's good when you can enter the off-season feeling good about your body so you can put some time in there.

Our young guys will not get much of a break. They'll be back here early May, to start their jump season, just continue the development work that got us where we got to that has been so central to our progress.

Directly to the fans, the Wizards train is starting to leave the station. It's not full speed ahead, but we do plan to move with a little bit of a momentum. It's a fun time to be a Wizards fan as we start this climb together and put some coal into the firebox.

With that...

Q. Alex Sarr made a significant leap this year. He also played differently on the offensive end. How did that come together, the planning of it, the execution of it?

WILL DAWKINS: The planning of his?

Q. Him overhauling his shot diet.

WILL DAWKINS: I think Alex had a fantastic second year. I think you guys sat down and went into it, it's more confidence in his body and physicality. Year one you see what you can do. Year two he went out there and tried stuff differently and built up his confidence.

His shot diet really changed going towards the rim. I think he was 80th percentile at the rim, which is hard to do for a young player. He built his confidence off that.

Again, we knew Alex is going to be someone that continues to grow and make those steps. He had moments when he was playing in All-Star form on both sides of the basketball.

It wasn't just his offense, in my opinion. Obviously finished second in the league in blocks. Then we talked about just someone that's 20 years old that can average 15 and 2 in the league. That's a very, very short list as a sophomore player. We still feel pretty positive about his trajectory. He's a skilled players. We're adding more skilled players around him that show what he can do.

Q. How would you evaluate the team's overall defense this year and the improvements you saw?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, not where we want it to be if we're going to be completely honest. We want to be known as a defensive team. We want to take pride in that. We're going to continue to add players that are defenders and continue to challenge our group.

I think there were moments that were pretty good during the season defensively. I think BK, when he talked to you guys throughout the season, probably hinted on what his agenda was, what some of the things he was focusing in on with our group.

Number one was protect the paint. We wanted to make sure we were getting back, making it harder for teams to score on us at the rim. Being fifth in blocks goes to Alex, but other guys with length and activity. To be top five in blocks is pretty good for us. We sacrificed our body, which is hard sometimes for young players. We were eighth in charges. If we couldn't get it in the air, we were trying to prevent it on the ground. We were 13th just overall rim field goal percentage, all while cutting down the number of threes teams were taking. I think we cut it down to where we were seventh in three-point attempts.

Three points, forced them to take more midrange shots. Those were the things we were looking for. Overall our defensive efficiency needs to get better. We think that's going to happen with the growth internally, just the size of our players, getting stronger, but knowing the game a little bit more and the tendencies of other players. I think adding Anthony Davis next to Alex will increase our rim protection.

Q. We know you guys have been more focused on the process than the results with the individual growth of your players. Now that you have these pieces here in Trae Young and Anthony Davis, you mentioned how you want to be more competitive in these games next year, will the way you evaluate some of these players change because there will be a little bit more expectations for some of these competitive results?

WILL DAWKINS: I'm not sure the way we evaluate will change. I think our style of play will change a little bit. The minutes are going to matter a little bit more. I think that's going to be important.

You'll have to find a way to still balance development, which is always going to be at the forefront, with trying to win some more of those games. I think the building is aligned on that and our players are aligned on that when we talk to each other.

The biggest thing I can say is next season there's players with a lot of chips on their shoulders who want to compete,

who want to prove for whatever reason they belong in the league, and they want to do it together. I think you'll see a little bit more of a 'we' over 'me' mentality with people buying into the greater good of the team and compete for longer stretches than we did this year.

I don't think the way we evaluate will change.

Q. When the results are what they are at this point, you have your players focused on going within themselves, you will have lot of patience in the young players in their individual growth, what specifically could frustrate you as a general manager from your players? What specifically would frustrate you about certain things from the past three years?

WILL DAWKINS: If I were to look back at it, there probably weren't a lot of frustrations. I think growth moments are important. That's how you improve, that's how you get better. We track those. If a guy is not making the right read in December, but we're working on it, he's making that right read by March, I feel good about that.

It's hard for me to get frustrated when they're learning. For me the frustrations is more so when we don't compete to the standard that we have. I think more often than not we did that this season. I think the end of season was a little different with all the injuries and different lineups and experimentation. For the most part I think we're growing as an organization. The infrastructure internally is really, really strong. We know what works here. We know the type people who work here. It's hard to get frustrated when you have a lot of that in your building.

Q. What did you like most about what you saw in terms of improvement with the competitive maturity of Kyshawn and Bub this year? What do you want to see moving forward?

WILL DAWKINS: I think that group of sophomores I guess they were last year, they set the table in the summertime with their level of work. Kyshawn and Bub specifically you asked about created like a nighttime club where they were coming in here, working out 8 to 10 in the morning, leaving, coming back 5, 6, doing their nighttime work. It was like just one, just two, just three. By the end it was a group. Those guys really created a culture of work that we were looking for. Then I think that just led into their season.

I think Kyshawn more than most really benefited from playing in the off-season with his national team, having the ball in his hands, being in those competitive environments. He was probably more ready to go at the beginning of the year than some of our other guys. He proved it.

You guys saw the numbers. He basically grew in every statistical category possible. It was more so his leadership and confidence and physicality that he plays with. He knows he belongs. He knows he can get to his spots now. I think he'll have another jump this summer.

Bub, our Ironman, everyday accountability person. I think it's a testament to nothing's linear as well. You have to put the work in. He did that. He probably didn't get off to the started that he wanted, but he didn't get deterred. He was playing with a different lineup, different guys, different vets, sometimes the ball in his hands, sometimes not. He found that balance and improved across the board with the season as well.

I think with Bub, he spent so much time on his shot. You look at the shot check numbers, who is leading, it's always them. Bilal actually led the group this year, which was pretty good.

Those guys are always up there. For Bub to be a second-year player, shoot 40% off the dribble and off the catch, that's really rare. That's a threat for us moving forward as we continue to add more play-makers.

Q. You said the train is out of the station.

WILL DAWKINS: Starting to leave the station. Starting to leave the station. We haven't left yet (smiling).

Q. You said the players are coming back mid May for a jump season. This past season was called a jump season. Is there going to be another hashtag, if you will, for next year?

WILL DAWKINS: I'm out of my creative juices. We're going to stick with 'jump season' because every guy, we want our guys to make jumps. Big or small, when you have 168 days before training camp starts, you can make major jumps. We'll continue to stick with 'jump season'.

Q. You said before the season that you wanted minutes to be earned, not given. Do you feel you accomplished that mission?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, specifically early, early on in the season when we had more veterans and you were playing Khris and CJ, and Corey. Those guys were getting their time. You had to find time for guys to fit in.

I thought Brian did a good job of making sure we were balancing that with also balancing our young players improving. I think you can see that by unfortunately Cam got injured midway through that first part of the season, but he got those minutes early on, through the lineup. Gave

Jamir some time here and there. By the end of the year, Will Riley worked his way through the G League and finally got his minutes towards the end of the year.

Coming out of training camp he hadn't earned those, but he continued to work, show he was ready, showed what he showed in practice, got the minutes towards the end of season when they mattered. I think Brian did a really good job with that at the beginning of the year.

Moving forward we're going to have a lot of competition on the wing, which excites me. I think depth is the most important thing on a team, especially how teams are playing, how fast the game is. I think we have a lot of depth on the wing. Who is going to take those jumps and force their way into the lineup is the fun part of off-season for me?

Q. With Trae and AD, obviously the minutes are going to change with them. How do you expect that to sort of affect the young guys from the standpoint of they might get less playing time?

WILL DAWKINS: I think it's to be determined. We've always surrounded our young players with vets. They just probably haven't been to this level of player. But we've had Valanciunas, Brogdon, Tyus Jones, Kuzma. Our guys have always played with veteran players. I think we're adding more established Hall-of-Fame-level players and All-Stars to our team.

I think it will actually benefit them because we'll be in more competitive games and they can feed off of them, learn and grow. That's always been the plan, to surround our guys with veteran players. So that doesn't change for us.

Q. On the defensive part, Alex's growth is obvious as a shot-blocker. Collectively your numbers weren't as a group all that much different than they were the year before. Where will the connectivity come from? How does it tie together?

WILL DAWKINS: Very fair question.

Defensively as a team, we're not where we need to be. I think it comes with individual pride and just really being impactful and getting into the ball and forcing them. I think our defensive schemes will change. We'll use our length to get guys to shoot from specific places on the floor.

I think with Alex being such a rim protector and going and defending shots, we needed someone to clean up the glass as well. We gave up a little bit too many offensive rebounds at some point. Anthony does a great job of that. In the second half of the season Bilal did that as well.

I think what gives me confidence is the 10-game increments we talked about. I think when you look at our best 10-game segment, it was probably the end of December into the beginning of January before the Trae Young trade. After that there was a segment where we were 5-2, we were just connected on a string.

Our offense was 20th. Our defense was carrying us during that time. We were a top-10 defense, a plus-three, plus-two-seven in that rating. This is what we're doing well, this is what we can tap into. Let's go add players that can enhance that. That's what Anthony was able to do.

I think our guys independently will get better. Year three you're physically feeling better about yourself, knowing what players you're trying to take away from them.

It's got to be a mindset, a shift. When Brian talked about it the other day, that's who we're going to be and how we're going to win basketball games.

Q. AD was here the other day. When are you going to have these conversations that he seems to really want to have with you and Michael about the future of the team? How can you compress the timeline? You're not where he wants to be, but you need him next season to be better.

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I think the takeaway from that is AD, Michael, myself, we talk all the time with our players, every single one of 'em. It's not new to us.

I think when we made the decision to go after Anthony Davis, we did so to make him a Wizard because he's so competitive, because he's a winner and wants to win. We value those things. We want those things in our building.

His competition level is going to raise that for us. We'll have different conversations about the team and the timing of the team and everything of that nature. We all want to improve. We all want to get better.

I would say the time we spent with him, for him it's been enjoyable, and for us it's been enjoyable. I wish he could have got on the court and played a little bit. Towards the end he phased into one on one, two on two, three on three, doing good things with Alex.

He's excited about what he sees. We're exciting about where we can go. We'll have more conversations like we do with all of our players during the summer.

Q. A lot of players have talked about how helpful Coach Keefe has been on the development f side of

things. You've talk about train metaphors, gas pedal. Now that things are moving forward, how do you evaluate the on-court coaching job that he's done, and looking into the future?

WILL DAWKINS: I think you heard first and foremost when you asked the guys questions the other day about BK as the person. He's just that high-level type of person, has the connect-ability with the guys.

For me, it's probably clear he has a track record of development, like a really good track record of player development, both old and young players, which is rare.

We put him in the situation this season was a little difficult when you think about the amount of youth, the amount of change that we had. We led the NBA in starts for players under 21. I think we had 50-plus different starting lineups that we threw a lot at him and he still was able to kind of dive in and get consistency from our players, style of play, things of that nature.

When we get together and we talk, we gave our guys two or three things we want to focus on during the year. One is improve upon the O's. With Brian I thought we got better offensively as a team.

If you really take a step back, we improved from every area on the floor this year. Our rim percentage improved from 22nd to 13th. Three-point percentage, I was shocked it was that bad, but went from 29th to 18th. Even our offensive rebounds. We were teaching crashing.

Some of the standards, things he wanted us to be better at, we were better at this year. He's obviously a defensive coach. We're going to continue to pour into that, pour into him.

We increased our blocks, steals, disruptions. We're getting closer. He knows what it looks like. I think he's also hired a really good staff to help us get to that point.

We're in constant communication all the time. We'll continue to have discussions about what we can do, how it's going to look next year, things of that nature. We've already started that. We have a plan to continue to talk about that through the year.

Q. In terms of Will Riley, he had that expanded role towards the end of the year. Once you have a Trae Young and Anthony Davis in the fold, at least the usage probably won't be the same as it was. When you're building a team, figure out how all the pieces are going to fit together, how are you going to take what he was able to do, communicate to him what the

expectations will be if the usage is lower next season?

WILL DAWKINS: With those type of players, the end of the season is so important because they need to build that confidence that they know they can do what they do and build upon that.

A lot of the summer individual work that we talk about, you're going to have opportunities to do that, but maybe not as many.

I think you can see with Kyshawn, with Will, even with Tre Johnson, when you run plays with him, they have to be able to make plays. When games get tight and they start making decisions, changing their format, taking the ball out of certain people's hand, we want people to be aggressive.

We don't put limitations on what our players can and can't do. Will Riley might be the guy doing that next season from the very beginning of the year. We encourage him to make it really hard on Brian to play someone over him. That's the level of competition we want.

You're never too young to be productive in this league. My hope is that he's doing next season. Whatever that usage looks like, it is what it is. I know he is going to try his hard as he can to be on the floor and making plays like that.

Q. With Tre Johnson, probably because of the injuries, the minutes probably maybe weren't as much. How do you evaluate his rookie year?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I think the per-game minutes maybe not, but the totality of the minutes he was able to log as a rookie is still really productive.

When you look at how players grow, it's through minutes. I think I learned a lot about Tre in terms of just his toughness. Mentally tough and physically tough to get through everything he went through. He probably didn't let on, let you guys know, he was banged up. Nothing too serious. Just knickknacks here and there.

He established himself as an offensive threat very early in his career. So kudos to him for that. That's not easy. People were changing how they were playing us and him when he was on the floor. He had a really impressive stretch. I think even on the All-Star break was really close to 50-40-90 until his body did hit him a little bit, finished the season the way he did.

Overall optimistic, very excited to get him healthy and going again. He has a confidence and gravity to him that's really going to help us.

Q. I want to make sure I understood you correctly. Will Brian return as coach for next year?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, I anticipate Brian Keefe to be here.

Q. What are the challenges a coach has to take when he's going from a deconstruction phase to a build-up phase?

WILL DAWKINS: Can you repeat that?

Q. What are the challenges a coach faces when he's going from a deconstruction phase to a build-up phase, train leaving the station phase?

WILL DAWKINS: Appreciate it (smiling).

I think it varies. The good part is it's not like one here, one here. It's fluid. I think the challenges for him will remain stylistically how to best use our players and put them in position to be successful.

I think the mental shift of the group from a little bit more individual success and individual player development, like how we keep that going, but more fed into more team success. That's probably going to be the biggest challenge coming in. But I have a lot of confidence in him and the group to be able to do that.

Q. Can you give us any insight on what is the jump season going to be looking like this year? A little similar to last season or a little bit more veteran-heavy with Trae Young and Anthony Davis around?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, there's progressions to it, I guess. Bilal was very happy that he got a month off now instead of three weeks. He's graduated to that before he comes back to DC (smiling). The rookies aren't as lucky. I told them, Enjoy your time. We'll see you. Their exit interviews were short. We'll see you guys in a couple weeks.

Yeah, there will be more involvement. Just talking to Anthony Davis and Trae Young, they want to bring guys out to work out with them during different times of the year. They want to bring the team together. We always do it in Vegas. We have the whole team come out, build a home away from home. Practice facility out there, ball room, weight room, basketball court. We expect most of our guys to be there who aren't playing international basketball. They talk about getting together again in August, maybe in L.A. somewhere, away from here, so they can continue to bond and grow in that area. Those guys will be involved.

It will be pretty consistent three weeks on, one week off,

three weeks on, one week off throughout the summer for us. The one week that they're off, probably going to be bothering them and following them to whatever teams they're playing with and going back to different countries in France and Canada and Serbia while they're playing in some of those games. We'll have the heavy hand.

Some guys have grown out of the right away phase and earned a month off. They were happy with that.

Q. In case we don't get to talk to you before May 10th, what is your priority in the draft?

WILL DAWKINS: The draft is a little further. But the priority on May 10th is to get lucky, get lucky. The way I look at it is we're already fortunate enough to add a top-five player in this draft. I feel very confident that our staff will be able to pick the best player if we have five. I'm comfortable at five. It's the most likely outcome.

There's a 48% chance we are picking at five. Our fans should be excited about who we have. We also have a 14% chance to do better at one, a 27% chance to be top two, over 35% chance to be top three. Those are pretty good odds knowing you're already standing at five.

We're excited about the draft. Need to decompress, finish the season. I am going to have the Portsmouth here later tonight and watch a little bit of that, because we to have two picks in the 50 and 60, the later part of the draft. So watch some of those guys. Come back and focus back in on where our first pick is in the draft. Our scouts are busy. We're excited because this is a really, really deep draft.

Q. You obviously made a lot of trades over the years. What have you learned from the long-term moves that you can apply for the future?

WILL DAWKINS: Uhm... Good question.

I would say you never really know what's going to come of the transaction when you push the ball down the field. But you want to allow yourself to have as much roster flexibility, financial flexibility. I think the word is like 'optionality' to do what you need to do. In that trade specifically, you're working with a player you just met, you're trying to put him in a position that we all felt was best for him.

Each trade has ramifications down the line. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. The more bites at the apple, the more flexibility you have. You can kind of recover and wait for the right time to be decisive.

For us we saw the \$80 million with cap space we had in the summer. We also saw the free agent class. In the

event Trae Young was going to opt out when he was in Atlanta, he probably would have been our number one target in free agency. So why not go after a player like that, within our limits? We knew what we're going to spend. We had our grocery shopping list and we weren't going to go over.

Again, having the flexibility and the optionality to make the next move, without knowing what that final piece is going to be, is the fun part of my job.

I'm very fortunate to get to work with Michael Winger, who is elite in those type of situations and negotiation. It's a great partnership that we're able to kind of continue to grow and supported by so many people in our strategy group that keep us on par and allow us to stay the course and not stray too much, even when I want to do something wild.

Q. When Trae Young got to DC, you saw the buy-in from him wearing the jerseys of other teams around the city. The donation with his foundation he did today. Were you at all surprised with how bought in he was to being a part of this team right away or was this something you anticipated?

WILL DAWKINS: Surprised? No. Did he exceed expectations right away? Yeah. But I wasn't surprised because I knew who he is as a person. I've known his family, seen him for a long time. That's just who he is as human. He has a really good heart. He's invested and wanted to be here.

I think the jerseys are what everybody see, him at hockey games, things of that nature. The bond that he has with these players. I think you can see from today just the financial donations he made back to the DC Kitchen, funding kids' scholarships. He wants to be here and he wants to be a pillar in the community. People embraced him with open arms and he wanted to give back.

Not surprised, but very honored and happy to have him here.

Q. How far along are you in potential contract extension discussions with Trae Young and his representation?

WILL DAWKINS: Not very far. The season just ended. We have more conversations about what it's like to be here, what the season was like, how we can make this place better for all of our players. He comes in with some experience and things that he would like to see done differently here. Same with Anthony Davis. We asked our players how can we get better, make this place 1% better. That's the goal right now, most of our conversations are

about.

At the right time this summer I think we'll have those conversations and come to a resolution where he's here long-term.

Q. Unrelated question. How do you gauge Bilal's growth over the three years, particularly this past season?

WILL DAWKINS: Yeah, with BC, he hasn't had a full season, unfortunately, yet. Had a freak injury where he's playing for the national team, gets his thumb caught in the jersey the week before he's supposed to come to training camp. Had another little thing where someone in Boston kind of stepped on the back of his ankle. He wasn't able to get the continuity.

I think the second half of the season, post All-Star break, we saw the player we know he can become on the offensive end. The increased efficiency from the three-point line. I think his usage jumped up to almost 20% at the end of the year. It won't be like that next year, but there will be moments where you have to swing, cut, make decisions.

I think unleashing his athleticism with passers, like Trae Young, Anthony Davis, double-team, finding him in the corner, I think that's really going to unleash him. Defensively he's remained elite. Because we're not winning as many games, I don't think he gets the credit he probably deserves.

BC was like 95th in disruptions this year. That's just activity, let alone taking guys' shots away forcing them to take tougher shots. When you put him in stocks with all the bigs that lead the league in blocks, he's still 13th.

Defensively, physically he's on his way. Offensively I think he's inconsistent at times, but the way he finished the season gives us a lot of hope for who he's going to be.

Again, we knew his best was going to be further down the road than right away. I think he's right on par for that.

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