

# Washington Mystics Media Conference

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## Shakira Austin

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll get started.

**Q. Yesterday we were talking about you in this new scheme, playing fast, but not rushing. You haven't really been able to show all your stuff in the last couple years. What are you excited to show on the floor and what kind of developments have you been working on that you're excited to show off this year?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I just want to be aggressive. I feel like that's something that has been given to me as an opportunity to be aggressive on offense. Be efficient, but also be a play-maker. Getting my teammates involved. Basically uplifting them by allowing myself to be a scorer, but not focusing on just one on one. It could be a lot of people in the paint.

A lot of people might think I'm just trying to focus on my offense. That is something I would love to show. But Coach Sydney has been helping me to realize that allowing my teammates to get easy shots, just getting them involved is going to open up a lot more stuff for me.

That's something I always wanted to show as my game, as well. I would say that's the main focus for me.

**Q. In your exit interview last season you talked about wanting to get your body right. What was that process like? How are you feeling now both physically and mentally about your health?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I feel great. Just a year ago I was four months post surgery starting training camp. As realistic as I would love for me to start 100% healthy last year, that just wasn't the case, so...

Now that we're a year past that, I've been able to pour into my body, listen to my body, learn my body and really trust myself and knowing what's best for me, best for my career.

Now I feel I'm at the best shape I've been in, I think even since joining the league. I feel stronger. I feel like my

conditioning, I'm allowed to push myself a lot more than I have the past couple months. Really just my health in general, mentally and physically, I feel like it's where it needs to be.

It's been a while. I've had plenty of resources, plenty of people in my corner to keep me pushing. Now that we're finally here, it's just really up to God to allow me to have a full, healthy season.

**Q. With the puzzle pieces that are around you, how has that felt for you stylistically and where do you feel you've been able to fit in?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I mean, we have great players here, from our vets that we've had the previous years that I really haven't gotten the chance to play with in Slim, how aggressive she can be going downhill, her shooting abilities. With Stef, being a pop big, opening up space for me. That's all stuff we've had, but now we're bringing in even more.

We have Aaliyah that's coming in with a lot more confidence I believe to be able to showcase her skills. We have rookies that are coming in. Jade, she was the youngest player last year. Now she's our PG, almost vet. I can't call her a vet, but she's taking control of being that spokesperson, being that leader vocally on the court for us. That's huge.

Like I said, we have rookies coming in. Sonia, she's a damn good shooter. We have so many practices where coach is like, That's Sonia's first miss. Damn, girl. Save some for the league.

We have Georgia coming in. We have super confidence in her. I think she's going to be great just staying true to herself and keep pushing through. It's going to be some rookie lumps, but I think she's going to be great.

Kiki coming in. She is a monster. She is super strong. Super excited to be working with her. The list just keeps going on. We got Sug just being a vet and a guard.

I'm excited. I just want to be healthy, get out there and

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show them what Shakira competing looks like. I'm excited.  
I'm excited.

**Q. It seems like you're trying to turn this page on the health issues.**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

**Q. What do you want this year to be like for you knowing where you are in your career, what's coming up, how that all meshes together with a new regime and Coach Johnson?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I just truly want to be great. Being healthy is my main priority. I've been healthy. I've shown it, playing through Unrivaled.

For me, a lot of people might think I'm delusional. A lot of people are like, This girl thinks she's somebody she's not. I've heard that from coaches. I've heard that from fans.

For me, I just keep looking forward. I know exactly where I'm going to get to. I know that I work hard as hell to keep pushing my name out there.

All I've been waiting for is an opportunity. My health had taken it away from me. Certain systems have taken it away from me. Now I truly feel like God is blessing me with the greatest opportunity. The only person that will stop me is me.

I feel the organization has my back. Coach Sydney, the coaches he's brought in, has poured nothing but confidence into me. When we're just talking one on one, I get so excited. I'm glad we're texting. It would be crazy if they've seen me in person. I'm (indiscernible), super hyped.

I'm just waiting to show the world what I know I can do, what people who have seen me work know what I'm capable of doing.

It's not going to be all glitz and glamour. I'm probably going to look terrible some games, have bad days. I know in the end, when I get to that final picture, it's going to be all worth it and my name is going to be in a lot of stuff, so...

**Q. You mentioned Unrivaled. Now that you're actually here practicing, how much have you seen some of what you were able to do playing in Unrivaled translate back into the W, to this team?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: I feel like for Unrivaled, I've spoken on it a couple times now, but my biggest takeaway, my lesson being there was just the leadership I was able to adapt to

with Skylar Diggins.

Playing style-wise, for me personally, it wasn't the greatest. I feel like maybe defensively I was able to translate something to five-on-five.

Just simply the leadership that I was able to pick up on from them, Courtney, watching someone like her work every single day. Even though I didn't have games that I would be proud of, like, I was still able to go home and say, I learned something here. I can take this back to my team. I was just appreciative of that part.

**Q. You mentioned getting past the injuries. What have you learned about yourself as a player and a person?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Yeah, it's been tough because basketball has always been my outlet growing up. It was just something that it was, like, an escape for me. Having that taken away, it was very hard on my mental.

For me, I had to really take away me wanting to be healthy, me wanting to be back on the court. I really just had to take a step back and figure out who is Shakira outside of basketball. That's a tough question when all you want to do is be great in this sport.

I feel like now I'm at peace where even if basketball was taken away from me, I think I would be still in an amazing human and probably have an even better career in something else. I figured out I love fashion, I love food. So really understanding who I am outside of basketball has really been the biggest takeaway.

I still love it here. I want to be great, like I said. So finally getting through this hump has been very positive for me, so...

**Q. Your journey over the last couple seasons, what is one moment you don't want to forget that's happened to you?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: Uhm... I would say losing in the Playoffs. Being 0-4 for me, that was not a great taste left in my mouth. I was disappointed in personally my play, not being myself. I felt like throughout this injury and being on the court, sometimes 70%, being out there and not feeling like myself.

Something I've told myself now after being injured is just that if I'm going to ever step on the court again, I'm going to be me and I'm going to stay true to myself, stay true to my competitiveness, and be aggressive.

I think no matter what team you're on, no matter what your



role is, I think that's something that you should always just kind of carry with you. They want me, they'll accept me for me.

That's something I always hold after those losses so that hopefully the next time I'm in that position I can feel okay with possibly losing because I know I was able to give it my all and be my true self, so...

**Q. What are your expectations for your fourth season? How do you plan to build on your previous experiences?**

SHAKIRA AUSTIN: My expectations for myself is just to be the best possible teammate I can be first. That's being the best Shakira. I want to be able to make everyone around me better. But being 100% myself I think is going to do that.

I don't have a list of things that I want to have accomplished after this season. I think just trusting the process and trusting my work that I've been here for weeks now since Unrivalled was finished. I've been working.

I just stay true to it, trust in the Lord. I know all the things that I'm working on now will pay off in the end. So whatever that looks like at the end of the season, I'll be grateful for it.

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