

Washington Mystics Media Conference

Monday, April 28, 2025

Washington, DC, USA

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Media Conference



Q. Going into year two, what have you done in this offseason to improve your game and have a better year in the. W?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: I mean, I think some people saw a little showcase down in Miami this offseason, but outside of Unrivaled. I think this is my first offseason where I didn't have national team commitments. I could just be in the gym. I pretty much stayed in D.C. and worked on my game every day.

So dedicated a couple weeks to that. Then I got the great opportunity to play a little Unrivaled. First time playing three-on-three basketball. Also had a little one-on-one element to it.

So just getting reps of continuing to play against athletes that I play in the W really helped my game, but I think the most important thing that I was able to work on is just fundamentals: Ball handling, footwork, versatility, finishing down low, and obviously stretching out to the three.

Q. I want to ask just building on that about your growth as a driver. That's something you showed a lot in Unrivaled. Is that something you want to do more of this year, especially since guys have so many post players?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Absolutely. I think that I'm trying to expand my game to be more of a three-level scorer. Yes, driving is a big aspect of my game, but I don't want to be just downhill all the time.

Realistically basketball is not a straight line to the rim, so working on my IQ, decision making, and secondary defense, all elements I think I was able to rep that out at Unrivaled. As you said, three-on-three, a lot more spacing and iso ball.

But it's not going to be easy, so those reps in three-on-three really helped and I feel will transition over to five-on-five.

Q. What is all of this like for you, just the newness: New scheme, coaches, teammates, all that stuff? So as you kind of worked on your own game, how have you kind of envisioned it and how is it going blending in to the changes that were different from last year? And just a few goals that you have this year.

AALIYAH EDWARDS: I think this whole change, not only within our organization but across the league, has been so new to me. Obviously I came from a program, UConn, where I spent all four years there, same coaching staff pretty much, same teammates pretty much.

I've really taken everything in the offseason with the free agency that this is a business; it's a job. The league is growing ultimately.

So with all that being said, I tried to stay consistent in my routine of just getting better, being in the gym, and not letting the outside noise affect that.

I think that's something that I can bring to the team this year. It's a new chapter, new environment here in D.C. for us, especially for the young guys. It's kind of weird that I'm not the rookie anymore.

But especially for the young guys, just letting them know that if you just create good habits and keep a good routine, anything on the outside that changes shouldn't affect you or derail what you have envisioned for yourself.

I think that's something I can bring to the young people.

Q. Assess the impact of what you learned as a rookie and what elements are you looking to carry forward from what you learned last year here in the WNBA?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: I think some aspects that I learned as a rookie last season was just to be steady, a solid player; just go in and do your work.

Over time what you put in will show and come to effect. I think last season I was just doing the little things, something even as small as coming in early, make sure



you're on time. Just trying my best to continue being a pro at everything that I do on the court, off the court.

Going into my second season now, those are things I don't really have to worry about. They're kind of like second nature. I have to worry about the different tendencies offensively, defensively, strengths, weaknesses.

I think that's something I can bring into this season, this group, especially a young group that we have. I think "growth" is like the motto and the word for the summer for us.

As I said, just creating those good habits and hopefully they carry over throughout the season.

Q. Good to see you.

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Hey.

Q. Going back to Unrivaled for a second with not only you, but Slim, Stef, Kiara all playing down there. What have you seen from those guys so far in camp, and how beneficial do you feel like the Unrivaled experience will be for the team overall this summer?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Yeah, Slim, Kiara, Stef, I think all three of them got better, and even in Unrivaled being in that environment, I know we weren't on the same team, but playing against them and seeing them day-to-day I could see that we all got better and we grew in something.

Going into training camp now think Stef and Slim have really taken the leadership role of this team, of just helping us try to create an identity for a team. As we are new; we're young.

So I think they're our leaders and a great representation of what it is to be a vet and what our team needs.

Also I think Kiara, she's been someone I was following even before I came to the Mystics. She's closer to me in age than the other two, but just to have her to lean on, I think she's making some great steps.

She's also healthy, too, so I think this is began be a great season for her.

Q. My buddy Tremayne Dalton, who I think you know. Had some high praise for your one-on-one game.

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Yes. We still need to run the one-on-one with him, but, yeah.

Q. How are you planning on incorporating your

skillset from the one-on-one tournament to your game this season?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: I'm not looking to do iso matchup every time I get the ball, or craving that one-on-one backdown. But I think elements that I gained from it was just my confidence, knowing I'm capable of doing the things that I can and knowing I have the skillset in my bag, and when the time and place comes I'll be able to know, oh, yeah, I can get that fadeaway jump shot.

If it's a matchup mismatch in the post and like five seconds left in the shot clock, you know, I've done this so many times. I know what I want. I know where to get to my spots and how I can make the bucket.

It's more thinking of it in that way than everyone clear out and let me get in your bag. I think just elements from the one-on-one has really boosted my confidence of like I'm here, I've been here before.

I gained so much respect from all the vets around the league, across the league, so I think they're a little scared now, so we'll see how this turns out.

Q. Rookie year obviously was like a plan of how you want to improve and develop in the offseason. You brought up those things. Then a new staff comes in and some things change, anything change for you on what you to focus on in your game to show off to the staff to make you fit the needs they want to have for the roster?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: I think personally, no. I don't think anything has really changed. One of the things that's so great about this new staff that came in was they understand we're all pros, and I feel like they adjust to us as much as we're adjust to go them. It's very cohesive relationship.

So I think obviously they have Xs and Os they want to check off, but they understand as players we have personal goals, we have team goals. I think they really came in with open arms of like, let's do this together.

Q. When in you're in Jamaica, what were you able to take away from learning and seeing how track and field athletes prepare for their matches so you can take some things from them to assist you in how you're going to grow on the court?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Oh, my gosh. I'm glad that you brought that up. First of all, shoutout to Jamaica. Those are my roots. Both my parents are Jamaican.

I think one thing that I got from watching Boys and Girls Champs meet down there was just the dedication, determination that it takes.

Basketball is obviously a team sport. Track and field is just you against the clock. I think the youngest some of those kids were was like nine years old and they went out there and I want to say 22,000, packed arena, and did their thing.

I think that it really just grounded me, because I've been there. I did track and field when I was younger. Track and field and basketball were my go-to sports. It's not easy, but it just kind of humbles you that as athletes we go through so much, and where you come from and then where I am now in the pros, it's like -- it was just so refreshing to see that down there, especially in a country like Jamaica. They're so prideful. It was just great to be in that environment. Yeah.

Q. Just wondering, you're going into your second year in the WNBA now. You also, like you mentioned, have national team stints every couple years or months. I'm curious how you intentionally build those relationships and culture with the team when for example like in the WNBA you have a six-month offseason or in your national team when you don't see each other maybe for like a year or six months. What do you do to intentionally build that relationship with your teammates so when you come back it's like a seamless transition?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Yeah, some of the things that we do as an organization to keep that connection going throughout the year is one, we have a group chat, so all the Canadians link up and we always check in. I think we have like would you rather Wednesday, so it's very -- it's jumping up in there all the time always communicating with each other.

But then the W I think we have about five Canadians who are part of the women's national team so that's always refreshing as well. Just seeing them when we play against each other. But I think that as Canadians most of us do play in the States, so we do a great job just checking in. Whether that's Instagram, TikTok, or in the WhatsApp group chat.

It's never been an issue because we've been doing it for so long. It's just a part of the process I want to say. We're gearing up towards LA Olympics so starting this summer with the Olympic qualifiers in this quadrant that's about to come up, so super exciting.

Q. What are your goals for your second season, and

how are you planning to build on your rookie experience?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: Just to be more of a consistent player, especially on the offensive end. Just utilizing the skills and foundations that I have been working on in the offseason and having that carry over into my sophomore season. Really just trying to grow in all areas.

Things I can take away from my rookie season is I guess some of my rookie mistakes, like the little turnovers or the bad decisions with the secondary defense comes over or the petty fouls.

So just little nuances like that. Just trying to make less of this season.

Q. Last year when you came into the W, you had such an infectious energy and that commitment to win from day one. Can you speak to this year's rookies now that training camp has started and what their infectious energy has been like?

AALIYAH EDWARDS: I love how hungry they are. We're a young team, high energy and super competitive.

I think as any player going into the league as a rookie, like you're living out your dream and just super excited for the moment, super excited for the opportunity.

So you can definitely feel that in the gym. It's infectious across the whole team. We would rather somebody who's hungry and eager than somebody who is timid and scared. I love what I see so far.

Some of them are like the same age as me; some are older than me, so that's a little bit of a weird to me. As much as experience and insight I can give to them I've been trying to throughout this training camp process.

Once we start the season it goes by so quick and you don't have time to really sit down and think. But so far I like what you see.

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