

# Washington Mystics Media Conference

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**Q. Kind of a big picture thing, just a weird season a little bit with the mid-season move and everything. When you go look back and kind of the journey of this year, what stands out to you, and how did you feel as you've wrapped up in not necessarily a new place, another new place, just the journey of your season? I know you said, hey, your happiness was priority No. 1 this year. How did that play out?**

ALYSHA CLARK: Yeah, no, for me, I think -- I haven't had too much time to be able to dive into and process what this season was. This past off-season, I had a vision for what I thought this year was going to look back, and I was working towards things. To go into a season and it be the complete opposite of what you thought it was going to be is not only hard in itself, but to then process that I think is going to take a little bit of time.

But on the flight back last night, I think something that I was sitting there just thinking about was like, I'm so proud of myself and the way that I allowed God's light and character to shine through me to be consistent throughout this chaotic summer that I had, and for people that know me, my faith is a big part of who I am, and when things aren't going well, it's easy to be like, oh, thank God for this, and when things are going well, blessings are here, but can you maintain that same sense of gratitude and gratefulness when things aren't going your way. That for me was I think my biggest takeaway throughout the season was that when I look back, I can say my character and who I am at my core stayed consistent throughout, and I'm really proud of myself for that.

**Q. As you hit this weird crazy off-season that we've got right now and all the unknowns, CBA and all that stuff, with your role with the committee, do you kind of shift into that mode now that the playing days are over? Does that become the full-time job now, working on the CBA? How does your schedule/responsibilities with that now pick up, now that the court stuff is done?**

ALYSHA CLARK: Yeah, it's honestly almost immediate. Having Terry and Michael in New York last night and just having conversations with them, my EC VP hat is on.

While my games are done, I can now step in and be the liaison for the rest of the EC that are still continuing in Playoffs. I can be the face and be in meetings and places that I need to be on behalf of us while they go out there and continue to compete going for a championship, so my mind is absolutely in that mode now already. It hasn't even been 24 hours.

But I know what this off-season means, not only just for the players but for this league as well. Yeah, that's where my mind is, where I can be present, where I can continue to push and fight where is needed, and that's where I'm at.

**Q. In that same vein today, the democratic caucus, a couple caucuses had 85 Congresspeople sign the letter to Cathy supporting the players saying, hey, negotiate in good faith, what does that mean for you? I don't know how much background you have on how that came together, but them putting that out, what's that mean for you guys as the players?**

ALYSHA CLARK: Yeah, there was actually a call that started, I think, 15 minutes ago, but obviously I'm here doing these things --

**Q. There's definitely interviews at 5:00.**

ALYSHA CLARK: But to the point, I think just seeing the support that we have, and I've been a part of a couple -- not a part in like this fashion where I'm on the EC, but a part of a couple different CBA negotiations now, and just the support from the outside, from the democratic caucus, to be able to step in and see what it is we're doing and fighting for and to show support of that I think speaks to just where this league is, where the players have helped it grow to be, and I love being able to feel back in what it is this fight that we're after because it hasn't always been that way.

I've sat in a lot of spaces where that wasn't always the case, so I'm grateful for it and I'm proud of our union for

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continuing to be the standard in what these types of fights look like. So to be a part of that is something I'm proud of.

**Q. More focused on you and looking ahead towards the future, we don't know things, how this is going to shake up, but you're going to be unrestricted next year. I'm assuming you want to play next year, and assuming that you want to play next year, what are some things, whether it's here or elsewhere, some traits in a team, organization that you're going to be looking to prioritize wherever it may be?**

ALYSHA CLARK: Yeah. I definitely want to play. Yeah, I think that was part of it for me, too, this season is just proving to myself that I can still play and I'm still good enough to play.

There's a mental battle that you always have to fight, and I'm not going to go into detail, but there's a mental battle that as athletes you have to fight when your other influences and voices are coming in and telling you what you can and can't do and what you are and are not capable of, so you start to question it a little bit. For me, I was like, I need to prove to myself what I'm thinking and what I know is actually true.

So I definitely want to play. I'm grateful that I feel great. I'm grateful that I made it through another season healthy, especially where I'm at at this point in my career, so that's something I'm grateful for.

But yeah, this off-season, I mean, I'm going to continue how I was this past off-season. I want to enjoy coming to work every day. I want to be -- I want to come into work and enjoy competing with the players that I show up every day with. I want to be a part of an organization that is investing in us as athletes and our ability to compete, making sure we're surrounded by the resources that we need to be the best athletes, night in and night out on the floor.

I want to compete to win. I want to be able to be in a spot where there's a collective understanding of what it is we're fighting for, and everybody understanding that, and that's what we're going after.

Yeah, we'll see. We'll see what that looks like. For me, again, I'm just super grateful that I even get to still be in these conversations with where I'm at, but that's something that I want to help change the narrative of.

When you look at male sports, it's like, he's 38 and 40 and he's striving, how amazing. But on the women's side, it's like, oh, are you -- what do you want to do? Do you want to have a family? Do you want to stop? How do you feel?

It's not the same sentiment.

For me personally, I want to help shift that narrative. Being 38 is not knocking on death's door, especially in this age where you have the resources, people are understanding their bodies better and knowing how to take care of them properly.

So yeah, careers are going to be extended because of that. So I think just being able to continue being in that space with the ones before me, you look at DT and Birdy and what they were able to do. When I was a rookie, freaking Taj McWilliams-Franklin was still playing. There's more there and not allowing these narratives to put caps on older players of, oh, you can't do it. I'll be the one to be able to say when I can't do it anymore.

**Q. When you say "compete to win," do you mean be on a team that's in title contention, or do you just want to be competitive on a daily basis?**

ALYSHA CLARK: Yeah, just on a daily basis, like being able to come in this environment and, like, the way that the team attacked every day, I loved. I was like, wow, they show up every day and compete. You wouldn't have known -- we didn't end the season I think in the way that we had hoped, but you wouldn't have known that that's where we were based on how we showed up here every day, and that's something that I love.

So competing to win looks different in every team, every organization, and so for me it's going to be about which is the best fit for that. But yeah, I want to be in an environment where we're competing. I'm grateful that this was a place that I ended up and was able to do that with this young group.

**Q. Your answer two questions ago might make this a little bit awkward, but the way we've seen you kind of immediately jump into this team and be able to kind of coach up the rookies and you're the first one to speak in the huddles, the players at the podium, they're always talking about what you said in the locker room and what has stuck with them, and obviously your experience being on the EC, have you ever thought about going into coaching or going into the front office when your playing days are done? I'm not trying to shove you off the court, but have you thought about that or considered that at all?**

ALYSHA CLARK: I've thought about it. The coaching aspect of it, I'm like, well, no. I've been grateful that at least throughout my career, in 2013 I took off from overseas to coach at my alma mater at MTSU so I was able to step into the coaching side of things to be able to --



shout out, Craig, that's where we spent all our time in the lab doing our B-roll and all of that. But I was grateful that I did that at that time because of the sentiment.

Like people have always asked and thought, oh, you'd be a great coach because of the leadership style, because of the way I'm able to relate and bring people together and help elevate whatever environment I'm in, which I'm extremely appreciative of.

But I'm like, I don't know. I don't know because I like stability and I feel like in professional sports things are so unstable, and I want to be able to know that I have the time to be able to pour into and help watch players grow, grow as not only players but as people as well.

I don't know if that's coaching. Maybe it is something front office and that's kind of where I've started to think more of like, maybe I should explore this avenue a little bit more. So that's what I plan on doing this off-season, to try to figure out what that looks like and what areas with what I bring and what I have to offer would be able to fit in in those spaces, so that's what I'm looking at.

**Q. You mentioned growing and developing players. I want to ask you about Sonia, playing a similar position as you. What have you seen from her that has really stood out with how she's handled this rookie season, all the pressure she's faced? She has the ball in her hands her but she's been so steady with this team.**

ALYSHA CLARK: Yeah, I think that alone, like her poise from day two of me being on the team jumped out to me immediately. I don't know what it's like to be the go-to, quote-unquote, superstar player of a team, but I've been around enough of them to watch the really great ones, like, what makes them great, and that ability to be poised in all situations, all scenarios is something they all had in common.

So being here, seeing that in her, I was really, really impressed with. She doesn't get rattled. At least she doesn't show it, which I also think is a plus. The opponent never knows how she's feeling, and I think that can be such a superpower.

You have players that are super emotive and they come out and show you, wear their emotions on their sleeve, and you're like, okay, cool, and then there's other players where you have no idea. It's been pretty cool to watch her.

I've picked up in the time being here of when she might be frustrated or whatever, but the opponents don't know that, so I think that's going to be something that's going to carry her a very long way in this league.

**Q. We've been talking with especially the younger players today about what you learned this season and things like that. For you as someone who for your first five or six years you were on teams that didn't break .500, now when you look back at those years, what did you take from those years that you hope these young players take here? Obviously hopefully they can get to over .500 quicker than that, but what did those years mean for you as a player?**

ALYSHA CLARK: Those years for me were crucial in, like, building my habits. When you aren't winning, what do your habits look like? Do you maintain your professionalism? Do you maintain your routine? How do you go about that? Do you allow the outside circumstances to dictate how you show up?

For me, I hope that for them, and that's something I tried to impart on them, was regardless of the outcome of the game, you have to do the things to maintain yourself, your body, your mind. You have to still continue to show up and be a professional and do your job because at the end of the day this is our job. So can you still do that when you're on a six-game losing streak? Can you still find that belief within the group? Can you see that and pull that out of each other in those times?

For me, I was really fortunate to have some amazing vets during those years to be able to teach me, and so I've had some people over the last 24 hours saying, like, yeah, just the way that you show up every day, the routine, all of those things matter because they don't know. So for me, it was like, well, that's normal. You should be lifting, you should be doing recovery. You should still be getting shots up and working on player development. I don't care what the record is.

I hope just by showing up and doing the things that I've done, I hope that that's shown them that this is how you start a foundation and this is what you build off of, those building blocks, because when you get to the highs and you're competing for championships, you're going to always fall back on your habits, and what habits have you started, what habits have you started to build. You want to make sure those are good ones and great ones.

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