

Washington Mystics Media Conference

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Jade Melbourne

Media Conference



Q. Just wanted to ask you to look back a little bit and just kind of the journey of this whole season, the newness in so many different ways that you just listened to us all talk about, ups and downs of a season, both personally and as a group, kind of what stands out to you when you think back about how it all came together and how you tried to figure out your role in this whole thing as it was continually evolving throughout the year?

JADE MELBOURNE: Yeah, I think the most impressive thing is we knew the goal going into the season wasn't to win a championship. It was to lay the foundation for what the Mystics want to be moving forward.

I think obviously I'm biased, but I think we did a pretty good job of that. I think from start to finish, everyone grew in some sort of aspect. People's games collectively got a lot better. Our identity as Mystics playing with that joy, getting better every day, all our daily habits, they were echoed and they were also followed up as well.

I think the buy-in from everyone has really laid the foundation for what I know this franchise wants to do moving forward. It was exciting. We celebrated one another. Kiki, Sonia, they broke record after record. I didn't realize there was that many records to break. They just kept doing it.

My fellow point guard buddy, Sug, had a career-best year and that was awesome to see. I could honestly go up and down the roster with the individual growth and the small things people were able to achieve that outside people might not notice.

But the growth was enormous. I think just as an individual, I definitely felt the development. This place allows you to grow through mistakes as well, and I think all the coaches do a fantastic job of encouraging us and letting us know that we're important, and I think that's really cool as well.

The growth was huge. I obviously took on a bit of a bigger

role. My minutes doubled, and there was some growing pains with that, trying to figure it out, trying to be more of a voice and a leader. There's a lot of things I'm excited to do over the next six months to be that piece that I know I can be, so I'm excited for that.

Yeah, just continuing to grow, get better, and just be the best teammate possible.

Q. Next six months, what's the focus? Have you identified a couple things that, hey, when I come back next season, I want to add X to my game or have added X to my game during the off-season?

JADE MELBOURNE: Yeah, for me it's just growing as a point guard and growing as a leader, honestly. I've played professional basketball for a while now. I know I'm still young, but I feel like I've said to myself, oh, you're the young person. I've always kind of taken a backseat. I love to listen and observe.

But it gets to a point where I need to step up. You don't get any younger, so you know, I play in the national team; I'm the youngest. I played professional. When I was 17 I came here as the youngest player in the league so I actually always just like, oh, yeah.

But over time you actually do get older, and it's a time now to step up. I really think I can take that point guard position with two hands, whether that's coming off the bench, but really just be that person that can get a team organized, recognize the mismatches and stuff. Really getting engaged with the X's and O's.

I obviously didn't go to college; I don't like school. So just being a student of the game and pursuing something that I actually do enjoy I think is kind of a next step for me.

Obviously consistency in my three-point jump shot, being able to consistently finish more at the rim, maybe even convert some and-ones and that sort of thing.

I'm excited. I head back to a team that I'm going into my sixth year. I have the opportunity to captain that team. So my team depends on me, and I think that's going to really



allow me to one, it's a good time frame for me to improve on some things.

And then I also get game reps as well, and that's something I'm really excited about because I think a lot of my growth comes from game reps, things you can't script because as a point guard you've got to be ready for everything. So I'm excited to take that on and excited for the growth over the next six months.

Q. We've talked before and you said the business side, off-season stuff, you pretty much leave that up to your agent. But you are unrestricted.

JADE MELBOURNE: I am.

Q. How involved in that conversation and things do you want to be, and regardless of where, what are you looking for in your next team, whether it's here or somewhere else? I don't know if there's certain facets or traits of a team that you're like, hey, I want someone who's -- their goals are different or whatever their goals are or whether they're contending or Playoffs or a million different things it could be. Do you have some facets that you're looking for wherever that may be?

JADE MELBOURNE: Yeah. Like I think we touched on, I'll leave a lot of it up to my agent. I'll let them do the talking. I'm not a controversial person so I don't like to do a lot of that kind of stuff. I just leave it up to them.

Obviously I'm not just going to say put me anywhere, so there's different things. But I think the most important thing is I just want to be in a place where I can be myself, just be me and be appreciated for who I am. I definitely felt that here.

Yeah, so that's kind of a need for me. I just want to be surrounded by good people. You don't know that before you meet someone. Obviously you can always hear things about them, but I'm not going to think about it for a while now. I don't think those conversations happen immediately.

I also have never been a free agent before so I'm not sure how it all works. I'm still learning. But yeah, whatever happens happens. Obviously I do have that tag on me. Yeah, wait until my agent comes to me with information, I'll feed him information and he can do the business side of things.

Yeah, there's no rush on it. The league could also be anywhere. We don't know what's going on with that. So yeah, just making sure -- I think the next step for me is

staying connected with the Mystics and seeking feedback from the coaches, taking that into my off-season team.

I like to give 100 percent to wherever I am at that moment so I won't be thinking about the W too much, and when the time comes to have those conversations I'll be talking to my agent a lot.

No thoughts on it so far. Yeah, that's just the way it is, and that's the business side of things.

Q. You mentioned Australia being your off-season team. Do you view it as being in Australia as your off-season, or is it kind of like two seasons? I'm curious the perspective for you, how you have that.

JADE MELBOURNE: Yeah, honestly, it's not an off-season, to be completely honest with you. Like I said, wherever I am at the time, I'll give my 100 percent, everything into that program.

Obviously being an Australian and one of the faces of that league and being a marquee player, I think, yeah, it would be pretty unfair to them if I considered it an off-season and didn't really buy in.

Yeah, what we're building at my Canberra team has been super important to me and I have kind of a huge role over there. Yeah, I just buy into anything. I know each season will complement one another. I develop my game here; that will help me in Australia. I get to work on things in Australia that will then help me the following season.

Honestly, you just look at it as a 10-month season to be completely honest. It's obviously two teams, but yeah, there's not really much time off, but I love basketball, and that's the way it is. I enjoy it, so...

Q. When you're setting benchmarks for yourself, at what point of the year is that? Is it after your WNBA season? When do you start checking things off?

JADE MELBOURNE: Honestly, in this -- throwing international commitments in there, there's not a lot of time to reflect on much. You get to the end of some years, like last year obviously was a whirlwind for me getting traded, going to the Olympics, getting a medal, going back to Australia. Like it just felt like it didn't stop.

But yeah, like I have goals going into every season. They vary depending on what my role is. I'm someone that never really judges my performance off the stat sheet. It's did I fulfill my role for that team.

Just identifying my role early days, just making sure I play

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up to my full potential in that, and then there's different things that complement one another and seasons go hand in hand. Just continuing to grow. I'm still young. There's a lot of things I don't know.

So just continuing to get better, and yeah, when I do get a week off maybe -- I've only got eight days between this one and the next season. Yeah, just making sure I take that time to reflect, appreciate what I have done, and set next goals for the next two years because who knows when the next break is coming.

Q. We spoke to Georgia earlier and asked her about the camaraderie that you and her share, obviously being two Australians, and she mentioned how you helped guide her through the process of just dealing with the season. You've also quickly gotten a reputation of being a joyous and passionate person. How critical is that to your individual success? How much of that has to be there for you to be successful?

JADE MELBOURNE: I mean, if I'm not having fun or if I'm taking things too seriously, you don't want that Jade Melbourne on your team. I need that -- we all fell in love with the game of basketball because it was fun, and if you take that aspect away and it becomes a job, I think that's when you really get stuck in the grind and things can feel a lot heavier than they are.

Yeah, I think if I can bring joy to my team and make everyone know that basketball is one thing but life is a whole other thing and we can just enjoy ourselves and be the best version of ourselves -- I don't think anyone that locks in and takes it way too serious is at their full potential.

This thing is meant to be fun. Joy is a word that was used so much this season, but it's so true. When we were playing and having fun and connecting and celebrating one another was when the Mystics were playing their best basketball.

Yeah, that's a big part of who I am. I was raised like that. My mom always approached everything with a glass half full. Yeah, I always found the positives in life, and yeah, nothing is too deep or serious. When you keep it like that and are able to stay on track, I think that's when you enjoy yourself and you also grow.

Q. As soon as you get home, first thing you're looking forward to doing?

JADE MELBOURNE: I can't wait to see my dog. I can't wait to see my boy Jimmy and Snoopy. They'll be full of energy. Hopefully they recognize me. And then a good Australian coffee.