

Head Coach & General Manager James Wade Media Availability July 11, 2020



On the general state of the team

“Today’s practice was the second day of practice. We were trying to bring them along. It’s been four to five months that most of our team hasn’t played. “We’ve just been trying to get used to the scenery and get used to different practice times. The players are anxious to play but they know their bodies have to catch up to where their minds want to go so we’re just trying to make sure that they’re healthy, continue to build our chemistry in this wubble or whatever everybody’s calling it. I think our chemistry is pretty solid, now it’s just about getting them in game shape.”

On the roster build

“I think it’s pretty interesting because we had to do our roster based on what we expected for camp to be. Normally, we get to come into the season with 14 players from draft, from free agency and things of that nature. We had to cut our roster down to what we thought it would be and because of prior injuries we were stuck with with 10 players. So, I mean, you’re always happy with more but I think the quality of players that we have is actually pretty solid.”

On life in the bubble

“I think we kind of made out pretty good because they have three areas that you live in. You have the hotel, next to the hotel you have the villas. The villas are nice houses actually. And then you have the lodge that’s on the other side of the campus by the gym. Where we are is kind of like I guess the central part where you have the villas and the hotel. So, the players are really connected together. We don’t have to go far to see each other and we’re not out of the way. And so everybody’s kind of feeding off each other’s energy. We have all the necessities that we need to be here. You might have a couple packages

that people order, they go order food and stuff like that. They have a nice selection of food for us, so it’s actually pretty good. I don’t know what to compare it to because this is you know all new and pretty foreign for everybody. It’s been pretty good so far for us at least. We’ve heard stories but for our team it’s been pretty good.”

On the changes from last season, both on and off the court

“That’s a good question. I think the difference is we have a majority of our players that were on the team last year. And so what happens is we have a culture in place. They’re actually, everybody’s co-captains to their culture so they, they actually help us move along. Even better, it’s not just my ideas and what’s going on in my head. Now everybody has the same ideas. And so for the new players that we have on the team, it’s actually easier for us to carry that along because we have the players that echo everything that we do within our organization.”

On Diamond DeShields’ growth

“I think the playoffs were a big stage for her. It was big, she had two really great games during the playoffs. So, I mean, we are going to lean on her to continue to grow in our system. I think you’ve only seen the beginning of what potentially she could be so hopefully she can step into that role and just keep on growing as a potential star in this league.”

On the changes to his coaching this season

“It’s a balance. It’s a tough balance that you have to come to where you know that the players haven’t played in a while. You want to push them a little bit more but at the same time you don’t want to risk injury and putting them into the red too much. It’s a lot of getting them in shape. The new players, it’s a lot of teaching. We just have to try to find the correct balance and so we always pre-practice, pre-plan and then after practice we talk about the practice, the day and where we can improve and what the players get and what’s more natural for the team and what’s less natural. So, we just try to balance it out. I think we try to do everything at an up-tempo style, up-tempo pace where you try to incorporate conditioning and everything we do and every drill we do. That’s probably the thing that’s probably less foreign for us because that’s the way we play. We’re a team that plays at a high pace. So conditioning is always a part of what we do, whether it’s we are fresh out of a offseason, or whether we’ve sat out a long offseason. We always incorporate conditioning because we always want to play it at high pace.”

On what success looks like for the Sky

“I’ve talked to many journalists. I don’t want to put a limit on us. I never have expectations. I don’t know what success looks like. Success, what it would look like if, if you’re talking just for me as a coach, coach in this group is for us to get everything out of what we could. I don’t know what that means as far as playoffs, championships, I don’t know what that means but I can tell you once we get there.”

On what this experience has been like

“I feel safe. I feel safe for our players. I feel safe for myself and the staff. The one thing that they’ve continued to do is have continued testing. And it gives you a peace of mind of what’s going on around campus, and they’ve taken extra precautions as far as to continue social distance and things of that nature and once we’re off campus. Once we’re outside of our hotels or villas

or wherever we’re staying. We always walk around or ride around on the golf carts with masks. It’s a lot of wipes and a lot of disinfectants that they have antibacterial soaps and liquids and things of that nature so I think is one of the safest places to be. And with the continued testing I think that they can actually mobilize if we do have a positive test and kind of get them away and quarantine them and stuff like that and take care of them so I feel pretty safe here. I think the only people that would probably feel safer is someone that’s quarantining in their house and not outside in the public.”

On the emotional challenges of being a coach currently

“Of course. I mean this is different. This is something that nobody is used to. So the one thing that I think that was important for us was the chemistry of our team and being able to lean on each other and and be vulnerable around each other. And we don’t take anything for granted. So, we know that at times you’re probably going to feel like the walls are closing in on you but we just try to support everybody’s mental health and you know if anyone needed help, we will be there to support them and we’ll look for the resources that they provided on this campus.”

On the social work resources available in Bradenton

“They have those resources here on campus. I don’t know the outlines of it because I haven’t used those resources as of yet. I can’t say if any of our players have or not but just talking to our players and practicing with our players every day and being around our players, everybody’s in a good mindset right now. And we’re leaning on each other a lot so I think we’re in a good phase of where we want to be.”