

The Washington Wizards fall to the Chicago Bulls, 129-127, in their final home game of the season, as the team continues to develop for next year.



(Anthony Gill, Marvin Bagley III, Kyle Kuzma, and Landry Shamet stand at the bench late in the second half. Photo by Mark Schiefelbein.)

By Keelin Brown

WASHINGTON — In their final home game of the year, the Washington Wizards fell to the Chicago Bulls, 129-127, Friday night at the Capital One Arena. The game stayed close through the final seconds, as a critical late 3-pointer from Wizards forward Corey Kispert and a split pair of free throws from Bulls center Adama Sanogo left the door open for the Wizards. But forward Deni Avdija missed a final free throw with six seconds left, which could have sent the game into

overtime. Throughout Friday's loss, the Wizards focused on finishing the season strong and developing their players for next season, a focus they plan to carry into their final game of the regular season on Sunday.

"These are great experiences," Wizards interim head coach Brian Keefe said. "We played a lot of close games, fourth-quarter games. But taking advantage of the opportunity, I think that's the thing that I was really pleased about with them. When the opportunity has been there throughout the year, they seize the moment and continue to grow."

That growth also showed early in the first quarter, as the Wizards came out aggressive on offense. Recently signed forward Tristan Vukcevic got the Wizards started with nine quick points, followed by his teammate Johnny Davis, who knocked down his first three shots, two of them being 3-pointers.

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5sNBkoAkW0/?igsh=ZXF5aG40a3FpdGxz>

"They just told me that I had the green light," Davis said in the postgame press conference. "I hadn't missed yet, so I thought that all the shots I took were good shots and they helped the team. So just going into the rest of the game, I was just going to let it fly."

Though the Bulls struggled in the first quarter, they quickly turned things around in the second, thanks largely to Javonte Green, who finished the game with 24 points, seven rebounds and two steals. His leadership, tenacity, and energy kickstarted teammates Jevon Carter (20 points, 12 assists), Adama Sanogo (22 points, 20 rebounds), and Dalen Terry (17 points, eight assists, four rebounds).

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5sRDg8O1Nh/?igsh=YXY0ZHRhYzdxZndl>

Both teams continued to exchange baskets throughout the third and fourth quarters, with four lead changes and four ties after halftime. Kispert's three with 16 seconds left in the fourth quarter trimmed the lead to a single point, but as time ticked away, the Wizards had no choice but to foul, sending Sanogo to the free-throw line. But after Avdija matched Sanogo's split free throws with a split of his own, the Bulls held on to win.

The loss dropped the Wizards to 15-66 for the season — a season that has become more about preparing the team for the next campaign and familiarizing its young players with the team's offensive and defensive schemes.

“We want to develop all of our players,” Keefe said. “Our G League is something that is really important to us. When we talk about the relationship between the Go-Go and the Wizards, it's really one organization. They had a great year, and a lot of those guys have been playing minutes for us in the last month. Jared Butler, Eugene [Omoruyi], Patrick Baldwin Jr., Justin Champagnie, Jules Bernard, Johnny Davis was down there — they've paid dividends, and those guys have all produced when their time has come for us.”

The Wizards will travel to Boston on Sunday to take on the Celtics in their season's final game.

“We got one more game,” Keefe said. “We are going out there to Boston to make it a great competitive game, and that is what we are looking forward to doing.”