

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

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Boston Celtics

Joe Mazzulla

Media Day



Q. Joe, as a franchise player, how does Jayson Tatum make your life easier on a day-in, day-out basis?

JOE MAZZULLA: I think he makes everyone's life easier. One, because of who he is as a person, the type of character he has. Your franchise player has to be a cornerstone of what you do. It starts with his high character, the way he carries himself, who he is as a dad, who he is as a teammate. His availability. He's there for every single practice, every single game. Loves being coached. Just carries himself the best way.

There's no one like him. He's great.

Q. Joe, it's not always easy for a star player to fit into a group of other stars. When Kristaps came here, how quickly did you recognize he would be able to fit into what you do?

JOE MAZZULLA: Right away. I think just all he cares about is winning. He's used the experiences he's had around the league. He's seen a lot, he's seen it all. He's seen success. He's seen tough times. He knows what the league is all about. I think at this point in his career, winning is the most important thing.

But it's both sides, right? He had to do his part to fit in, but we had to do our part as a team, guys that have been here before, meet him where he's at because of his ability to play at such a high level.

So I think it was just both.

Q. What's the value for you in learning from coaches who aren't in basketball, from studying guys who are successful in other walks of sport life?

JOE MAZZULLA: I think it's more like the things that lead to success are the same. You're in locker rooms, regardless of the sport, even if you're in a company, everybody is saying the same thing. The things that go into winning, the things that go into success: Toughness,

togetherness, connectivity, the mindset you bring. It's all the same. It's just a matter of getting the right group of people in the right spots, then just working to feed that mentality every single day.

You can learn from anything and everything. You're trying to stay as open-minded as you can.

Q. How is Jayson today different than the player he was when you first got here?

JOE MAZZULLA: I mean, every year he just has the open-mindedness to get better. So if you have that, you're naturally going to be different. But also, like, from the first time we were there, he's been through other stuff. He's been through success, we've been through failures, we've won, lost, had pain, triumph. You use the things you've been through every single year to make yourself better on and off the court. That's kind of where we're all at as a team, using those goods and bads to use us for where we are right now.

Q. With Jrue defensively, I think a lot of people point out the physical attributes and his capabilities in that regard. What is he like as a communicator and from the mental side on defense?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, he can process information. He can process situational basketball. He has an awareness of what's going on on the court. He has innate ability to communicate that in real-time because of his ability to just kind of take that all in. Who has the ball, who has the matchup, where is the help, what's the spacing, who can you help off of, when can you make a play. He has great instincts. That allows him to communicate at all times.

Q. Now that you're so close to the finish of the journey, how are you kind of taking it all in? Are you trying to enjoy this? Are you locked in, focused when you're at home with the kids? How are you digesting hour by hour before this ultimate cage match?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I mean, I would say this is not the end of the journey. The journey is for however long you're alive. This is just one piece to that.



Regardless of what happens you got to wake up the next day and do your job. The journey will forever be there.

You're just ready for it. You do everything within your control to prepare for it, mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually. Tomorrow you just get after it.

The game, the environment will tell us what we need to focus on, what we need to get better on and what we need to do. The most important thing is staying on a even keel and staying with poise. I think that's something our team has done a good job of doing all year.

Q. You've been here before two years ago, but as an assistant coach. What has changed in your approach now that you're the head coach? What did you learn from the NBA Finals experience?

JOE MAZZULLA: I had a good seat, great perspective in that. I think the biggest thing you learn is what goes into winning in the NBA Finals is the same as the last series, series before that, regular season, preseason, practice, training camp. It's the details, the execution, the ability to take your mindset and your body to the next level.

The toughest team will win. The team that makes the most plays will win. The team that can execute the details at a high level will win. It's no different.

The biggest thing we took as we were going through that series against the Warriors, the things we kept coming back to were the things we kept talking about the entire year - the margins, details, fundamentals, the way you go about executing at a high level.

Q. Talk about just what you recall from the two Js, their emotions when you lost, what they took from that, if you see kind of a different mentality coming into this Finals?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I mean, I think that's not the only moment that those guys are using to get better. The coolest thing about where Jaylen has been is his surrender to anything external and the most important thing is his growth and development as a person and as a player. That's all he cares about, is getting better. I think that's been really cool to see.

I think it's the same for Jayson. You can pick numerous experiences that everybody in our locker room has been through that you need to be able to use for the situation we're in now. That will remain the same for the rest of our careers.

I think it's all about using what you've been through good,

bad, indifferent, to help you in the present moment. The guys are doing it.

Q. Joe, you talk about staying in the moment, doing the same things that go into winning from before. How do you do that now with the brightness of the lights, the bigger stage? How do you stay in the moment? How is that different from the regular season?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I mean, unless they change the light bulbs in the arenas, they won't be any brighter than they were the last series. It's just sticking to the details, the things that matter, the truth. The truth of the matter is if you don't box out, if you don't sprint back in transition, if you don't pass the ball in a two-on-one, if you don't take away the other team's tendencies, if you don't know who you're guarding, don't recognize the spacing, if you don't talk, if you don't play hard, you're not going to win. Focusing on the most simple things and the truth, the truth of the matter is you have to do those things.

You have to do them at a high level. Obviously the stakes are higher, that just means that the details are more important.

Q. What does Brad Stevens mean to you? What does he mean to this organization?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I mean, everybody in the organization is a leader in their own way. Everybody sets the temperature when they come in. Brad giving me my start, hiring me, empowering me from day one as an assistant, giving me some of the opportunities that he has. But also the way he carries himself. I've always had a lot of respect for how he went about coaching, how he kept family balance number one. How he treated people number one. That was always more important than whether there was a success or a failure. I think he spearheads the leadership, the temperature of the building, just as everybody else does.

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