

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Boston Celtics

Kristaps Porzingis

Game 1: Postgame



Boston Celtics 107, Dallas Mavericks 89

Q. I know you had a month off and you probably weren't sure how effective you were going to be, but did you surprise yourself, was tonight a lot of adrenaline, a lot of passion? How did you evaluate your performance tonight?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: Yeah, I think obviously what helped me is just even from the walk out before the game and then getting on the court, getting that kind of support was unreal. The adrenaline was pumping through my veins and that definitely helped. Obviously it wasn't ideal that I was out for such a long time, but I did everything I could to prepare mentally for this moment coming back and it paid off and we got the job done tonight and had a good game and happy about the result.

Q. What did you think of the assignment to come off the bench I think just for the second time in your career and how did you find a comfort zone basically from the minute you stepped on the floor?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: Yeah, from day one I came here and I said like I'll do whatever it takes to help this team win, right? I think it was -- this situation, you know, it made sense. I didn't care. I didn't care. I knew I could prepare to come off the bench, which is something different for me, and that's what I did and stepped into that role and embraced it and had a good game.

Q. The other day you were asked are you a hundred percent? You kind of had this like long pause before you answered and got a lot of people nervous wondering what does that mean. Where were you at? Were you just messing with us? What was kind of the process of getting through that to this time now?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: Yeah, no, it's hard to say because like all these thoughts like went through my mind in that moment. Like, what do I answer? I want to say I'm fine, you know, but obviously I haven't played, I haven't

been out there, I haven't had the feel of like am I a hundred percent, you know?

But tonight was an affirmation to myself, no, that I'm pretty good, you know? Maybe I'm not perfect, but I'm pretty good and I can play like this and I can definitely add to this team.

Q. During your first press conference with the Celtics, you were asked if you would be ready for the challenge of the playoffs and you said, I don't know. What has gone into preparing yourself for this stage over the years and over this season to kind of be ready for this, and not just that, but to get dropped into it after an injury?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: Yeah, no. Yeah -- what was the question? (Laughing.)

Q. What has prepared you to be ready for this stage which you haven't been on, you haven't been out of the first round?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: No, at the end of the day, it's like, it's just basketball. It's okay, it's high intensity, it's like more -- you know, like, intricacies of the game and stuff, like, more focus on little details. But at the end, it's just basketball and I've been doing this for a long time.

Even if I have time off, I can jump right back in and I feel the same way. I get to my spots and I do, so whether it's playoffs regular season or whatever, I know how to do this.

That's it, just having that confidence, going out there whatever, first round or Finals, just going out there with full confidence and giving what I have to the team.

Q. Was there a moment that you felt like yourself? I mean, you were joking with fans. That's what you usually do. You never seem to be serious. You always take everything so lighthearted. But was there a moment out there you were like, okay, I got it, like, this is me. Like, when was that?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: You know, even when that first quarter when I checked in and start things going my way and stuff, I didn't even think about it. I was so in the

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moment and enjoying the moment and the crowd and everything, you know. I don't know, it's kind of like a blur to me right now. I have to re-watch the game, what happened and stuff, but I was completely just in the game. That's the best feeling. Like, I had the most fun and, yeah, and I hope to have more of those moments going forward.

Q. There's never been a player like yourself, a 20-point-per-game scorer in the season to miss this much time in the playoffs and come back at all, let alone have this sort of impact. Was there ever a moment, as he said, of doubt or testing or was it like, no, okay, here we go, I got this?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: Not in a sense of, like, am I going to be okay. Like, it was only like physical. Am I going to be good to go physically, not -- skills-wise, there was never -- at least for me never no doubt. But of course, you have ups and downs throughout the game, like all this stuff happens, but mainly for me, it was to get there physically and once I felt pretty good and the medical staff had my back and we did everything correct to get to this point, then they gave me the green light, I was good to go.

Q. Back to Joe's decision to take you up, to have you come in off the bench, can you tell me where that conversation took place, when it took place, was it posed as a question or did he just say, Hey, this is what we're going to do?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: No, we had a conversation and just came up to me, I know he knew I was going to be fine with whatever, you know, so he just told me, what do you think, like about this, and I said, of course, like, let's do it. And that's it. Wasn't no big deal and I trust Joe and he trusts me.

Q. What did he say during the timeout when the lead got down to eight?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: I don't know, but Joe always gives us the right message, you know what I mean? He himself is very almost -- like, he can be emotionless if that's what we need and he can just come in, like, completely even keel and give us the right message of what to focus on. And then he can come in and give us some motivation if that's what we need in that moment, some energy. But I think there he was just even keel and giving us some of the answers to what we need to do out there and that was it, we trust him with his leadership.

Q. Was your hesitation or uncertainty heading in more about your fitness, more about the calf itself, or just rust?

KRISTAPS PORZINGIS: I mean, a little bit of everything. A little bit of everything, right. It's tough to not play for a month and then jump into the highest intensity game in The Finals, it's obviously very tough. But as I said, I did everything I could to prepare for this moment, like mentally, and then just going out there and playing instinctually almost, you know, and trusting my body. And that was it. And as I said, like the support around me was great to get to this moment, and now, yeah, we just have to keep going and take care of business.

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