

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Saturday, June 8, 2024

Boston Celtics

Coach Joe Mazzulla

Practice Day



Q. On the balance between trying to disguise certain sets and being more transparent about what you're trying to accomplish offensively?

JOE MAZZULLA: The balance is having proper spacing. Making the right play. I thought we did a good job of fighting for our spacing, making the right two-on-one reads. That's more important than anything else.

And so I think regardless of who we are trying to attack, making sure we are at the proper spacing and making sure we are making the right play based on where the two-on-one read is is the most important thing.

Q. How would you describe your relationship with Pep Guardiola, and did you receive any advice before the Finals from him?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I mean, he's a great person. He's a great coach. Just humility, joy, work ethic, intensity that he brings. And, you know, we've grown to have a great relationship.

So I'm very grateful for him, and I'd like to think that we make each other better. So it's great that he was here. It's great that he was able to share some of his wisdom and got to spend time with him.

Q. You're able to get some of the stay-ready guys in towards the end of Game 1, one guy in particular, Svi Mykhailiuk. What has he done to help this team get to this point when we are not necessarily seeing some of those guys a lot in the postseason?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, when I talked with him in the process of deciding if he wanted to come here, I said the thing about our team is we need everybody and we are going to play guys. You don't get to where we are at right now and win a lot of games unless you have great depth.

And throughout the season, because it's such a long season, what those guys do kind of gets lost in the shuffle.

But there was moments where he helped win us games, second night, back-to-back, four in five, whatever it is, NeeNee [Neemias Queta] and those guys starting.

So their ability to just stay locked in and stay professional and impact winning is very important, and so that was what I told him before he came here, and him, the other guys and the player development staff do a great job of just staying on top of that.

Q. Jason Kidd just called Jaylen, you guys' best player. He said it twice. That could be a slight at Jayson, but how do you want your guys to read those quotes? They read everything, there's a lot said between games. How do you want them to digest when there might be gamesmanship here, there might be some type of -- that was said for a purpose, obviously. But how do you want them to take that in?

JOE MAZZULLA: Just need to focus on the truth. At the end of the day, nobody knows because they are not in the locker room. And so I think as long as we focus on the truth, we focus on the things that we talk about every day, we focus on the relationships that we build with each other, we focus on just that stuff.

They can look at it however they want. At the end of the day, what goes on in our locker room, how we communicate with each other, how we build relationships with each other and how we treat each other on and off the floor, that's the most important thing.

Q. For the first time since 1975, this is the NBA Finals where you have two Black head coaches. Given the plight, sometimes, of Black head coaches in the NBA, do you think this is a significant moment? Do you take pride in this? Do you see it at all?

JOE MAZZULLA: I wonder how many of those have been Christian coaches.

Q. You mentioned spacing a couple minutes ago, and I just wonder how that process over the last several years has kind of evolved to where you got your vets just -- because they know the game, they feel the game, they just kind of know where to go on the floor



and how to keep the floor properly spaced and how to always make themselves available for whatever purpose that they have when they get the ball.

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, spacing is, like, ages old. It's the most important thing. I think you've seen different spacings based on how the game has changed and how the game has evolved and how your roster evolves and how -- I think the better offenses have gotten, the more creative defenses have gotten, and the ability to put guys in certain spots, protecting the rim, where are your best individual defenders.

So being valuable in your spacing I think is the most important thing because you have an understanding of who is where, and you have an understanding of where the advantages are. And so it's one of those things that you have to fight for. It's a simple detail that, if you don't talk about a lot, it can get overlooked.

But your spacing can manipulate the type of shots that you get and the decisions that you make, and I think that's the fight. Dallas's defense, they are one of the smartest, best defensive teams in the league, and they have the ability to manipulate your spacing with their rotations and with their personnel, and so we've got to be just as creative and just as disciplined in our spacing to make sure that we can counteract that.

That's kind of what Pep has helped me with, spacing. Very important in transitions how you move those guys.

Q. Jerod Mayo said last week that you've been a great resource for him as he adjusts to becoming a head coach. Curious how you describe your relationship with Jerod and the other head coaches in Boston?

JOE MAZZULLA: I think as you get into this, you start to realize, once you're in a position, nobody can really relate to you other than people in those positions. So you develop a bond with other coaches and you know what they are going through and you know what the challenges are and the opportunities and the situation you're in.

So I think it's really important that we all stick together, me, him, Coach [Jim] Montgomery, Alex [Cora]. You just have to stick together and help each other through it because each of our four coaches have been through it, whether it's inside Boston or outside Boston.

Jerod and I got close as assistants, just how would you do things when it's your opportunity, what have you learned from the head coaches that you've worked for. And now that we are in this position, it's helping each other with the transition and the different experiences.

Q. What can you say about Sam Hauser, only seven points in the Eastern Conference Finals, then Game 1 he got eight points, even had some stops on Luka. What can you say about him keeping his confidence through those struggles?

JOE MAZZULLA: The most important thing for guys like Sam and Payton is having an understanding we would not be here without those guys. They have literally won games for us. And you're not defined by scoring. That's one of the strengths of this team top to bottom, whether it's the starters, role guys, not one guy strives to be defined by one thing.

So getting two stops on defense, being in the right spot, getting two rebounds, getting to the free throw line, sprinting to manipulate the spacing to get an open shot. All those things count for the same, especially at this time of year.

And Sam has done a great job in his career of not being defined as a shooter, of being able to do other things. And our team has taken that on, and we have to work to stay to be that well-rounded on both ends of the floor.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports