

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Saturday, June 8, 2024

Boston Celtics

Jayson Tatum

Practice Day



Q. Jayson, I just wanted to ask you, what role do you think Coach Drew Hanlen has had in your development, because we've seen him being super close to you over the past couple of years and throughout your career as a whole.

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, I give Drew a lot of credit for my development in helping me get to where I'm at. I started working with Drew when I was in eighth grade and every offseason since then, we've worked out together. That's like family. I've said it a million times that, you know, Drew is a big reason in helping me get to where I'm at, and you know, I'm very thankful for everybody that played a part in helping me, you know, reach my goal and continue to strive in this space that I'm in.

Q. Obviously your last Finals, up after Game 1, what did you learn from that experience that you can apply in Game 2 this time around?

JAYSON TATUM: That, you know, far from over, it's an extremely long series and not get too excited or get too down about a win or a loss. Don't feel like that the series is over and that we had it won because of the last game.

And if you lose a game, right, we talk about it all the time; that it's going to take however long it takes. If that's four, five, six, seven, whatever, we are trying to just take it one game at a time and not skip any steps, whatever we've got to do to win. That's what we have to do.

Q. We see you shift your game a little bit, that basically you're reading the game differently. That's my perception. And the team is doing a lot better. Is that something that you did at the beginning of the series, or you just are taking whatever the game is giving you?

JAYSON TATUM: It's just about reading the game. Draw so much attention, you know, when I have the ball in my hands, and you know, it's about creating an advantage. We always talk about that, watching film, creating

advantage, finding the mismatch that we want, and it might not always end up in the shot for you. Or if you set a screen and get a smaller guy on you, just having that mismatch and calling for the ball, right, it may draw other defenders to help, and we can pin in for somebody else to get a shot.

You know, those things won't show up in the stats sheet, but it's part of our execution, and sometimes you have to make a sacrificial cut or things like that to generate good shoots.

Q. Along those same lines, when you get that matchup that you're looking for, are there times where you think, I could score here, but I have to make this pass, or are you thinking, like, I know if I get this teammate involved, he might hit a couple of shots and that's going to pay off later? What's that thought process, aside from just, I see this guy in front of me and I want to cook him?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, I mean, it's a lot that goes into that, right. Time of the game. Time to score. Who is in the game with me. All those things play a part.

A lot of times, if you can generate shots for other people and make the defense have to respect those guys, it eventually opens a lot of other things up for you later in the game that you can take advantage of.

Q. When Jason Kidd was in here, he made a point to say Jaylen Brown is the Celtics best player, which raised some eyebrows, obviously, because of your status. What's your reaction to J-Kidd saying that?

JAYSON TATUM: No reaction. This is a team sport, right. We understand that. We wouldn't be here if we didn't have JB on our team, and we can say that for a lot of guys, right. We have all played a part in getting to where we're at, and we understand that people try to drive a wedge between us. I guess it's a smart thing to do or try to do.

We've been in this position for many of years of guys trying to divide us and say that one of us should be traded or one is better than the other. So it's not our first time at rodeo.



Q. What's the process for you of identifying at the start of a game how a team is trying to defend you, in particular, certain coverages, how you can be more effective and how does it evolve over the course of a game?

JAYSON TATUM: They really just kind of test your discipline. They test, are you going to make the right play over and over and over again. Even if it's not resulting in you getting the shots or you scoring all the points.

But you know, you're constantly scoring at a high rate. We are up 20 at halftime. They are trying to test if human nature is going to play a part of wanting to get yourself going. Instead of doing all the things that is making the game easier for the team, you know, you just have to stay committed to doing what's right and making the right play until they adjust their defense.

Q. You said about passing the ball, the right player making the right shot, game on the line. You get doubled: Who are you passing to?

JAYSON TATUM: Whoever's open. (Laughter).

Q. Dallas has found a way throughout the postseason to respond after a loss. What will you say they have been successful at coming off a loss that will pose a different challenge for you guys tomorrow?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, we understand that. I feel like we're going to get -- I don't want to say their best shot, but you know, we understand that they are going to play a lot better, and we have to be prepared for that. Not let it catch us off guard or, you know, wait till the second quarter if we are down to lock in. Understanding from the jump that they are going to come out and play faster. They are going to shoot more threes. They are going to play harder.

So I think knowing that coming into the game is the first step. And then, you know, focusing on what we need to do. There's a lot of things that we watch in film that honestly we feel like we could be a lot better at.

All in all, we feel like tomorrow should be really fun.

Q. When you said people have been trying to drive wedges between you and Jaylen, how have you guys handled that in the past? Is that a conversations you guys have? Have you guys, like, overcome that?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, we've had conversations about it before. In all reality, we've just had to deal with it for a very long time. I think it's part of us maturing as men, right. Very, very young coming into this league, and just had to

deal with all the ups and downs of, essentially, the success that we've had. There's been positive things and there's been negative things that come with that.

We are not the first duo to go through that process, and we won't be the last. So understanding that side of it, and just keeping the main thing the main thing, and focusing on the job that we have front of us.

Q. How have you matured -- in the social media age, you can't help but hear criticism. I think a couple years ago, you were on Twitter and you opened yourself up to questions and the first question was about the '22 Finals. How do you ignore the criticism, or do you ignore it? How do you not internalize it? At 26, how do you not let it bother you that it would have at 21?

JAYSON TATUM: I think, like I said, just over time, you learn how to deal with things. There was a point, right, in my career where things did affect me or would bother me that, you know, to hear people talk about me on TV.

But you just have to come to a realization that, for one, don't take it personal. People have a job to do. You have to respect that. They have to go on TV and give their analysis of, you know, things that they see and watch, and that's fair. You understand what the media side has done for the game of basketball and how we have all benefited from that.

Again, people wouldn't talk about me if I wasn't one of the best players. I'm not the only player that they have ever talked about, and I won't be the last. So understanding that side of it.

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