

# NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

**Boston Celtics**

**Jayson Tatum**

Practice Day



**Q. There's been a lot of talk about your game outside, extracurricular. How good or how difficult is it to block all that out and be on the court, play your game?**

JAYSON TATUM: It's a learned experience. Over time you learn how to deal with all the extra noise and attention, whether it's positive or not so positive.

You know, I'm a fair, smart person. I know when I'm doing things at a high level. I know when I need to do certain things better. So I'm not, like, oblivious to what's going on.

At the same time, just keeping the main thing the main thing and focusing on trying to win the next game. That's what's most important at this time.

**Q. Kyrie, he's a great player, had some struggles in the series. What do you think you guys are doing well against him? Do you think he's just missing open shots?**

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, that's part of it, right? You never, like, completely shut a guy as talented as him out. You've heard it a million times: great players, try to make things difficult, show them different coverages, make them work for everything. They're going to make some shots. They're going to miss some shots. You just don't want it to be easy for them to be comfortable. That's with any talented player.

**Q. (Florida Panthers forward) Matthew Tkachuk is watching a lot of the NBA Finals. He's two wins away. You're two wins away. How much have you followed what they've been doing?**

JAYSON TATUM: I'm a big Matthew fan? We went to school together. I actually watched him win last night. Trying to learn and understand the rules in the game of hockey more and more.

I got to watch the game last night. They won. Like I said, I'm extremely happy for him and his family. Hopefully they

win it all.

**Q. It's only two games in the Finals. There's all this talk about your shooting numbers. How much would that have bothered you when you were younger? It's not like you're playing poorly. How much does the fixation on one number bother you?**

JAYSON TATUM: I think being in the Finals two years ago has helped me in this moment. Like I said, I understand that I do need to be more efficient. I do need to shoot the ball better, I would not disagree with anybody on that.

But I'm not letting it bother me. I'm still trying to find ways to impact the game and dominate the game in other areas.

I understand that it could take one game. One game, I could explode. All the percentages and things like that could change. So it's just that mindset of I'm one game away or whatever that means.

Like I said the other day, I know what it's like to be in this position and lose. This time around, trying to do any and everything possible to have a different outcome.

So, yes, I know I need to shoot the ball better. And I plan on it. Not letting that affect everything else that I need to do on the court to help us win.

**Q. Your coach just had a fascinating discussion with this gentleman in the front row from Brazil, essentially comparing you to Neymar and the idea that superstars get scrutiny. Does that mean a lot to you? Behind the scenes, have you had those kind of thoughts where you contextualize the spotlight experience?**

JAYSON TATUM: Yes, that's one thing where I truly do appreciate Joe, aside from being I think an excellent coach, is that I truly do believe that he cares about us, our team as individuals, obviously myself, the conversations that we have.

He always, through the season, the summertime, obviously through this postseason, has had days where he's called me, called me into his office. Not necessarily talk about X's and O's, but check on me as a person, how I'm dealing

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

with everything.

That does mean a lot for somebody to take time out of his day to show that compassion or whatever, just know that he's there for me. That relationship between yourself and a coach is important. That's something I truly value about the relationship that me and Joe have.

**Q. On a very different note, Jaylen has talked a lot this year about the pride he's put into the defensive end of the court, taking on big challenges. How have you seen him, over the time you've been together, really grow at that end of the court? How much has it helped you guys to take Luka on 90 feet from the basket, take as much energy out of him as he can?**

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, that's just another thing. I think Joe always challenges, in particular me and J.B., to find different ways to affect the game. I think J.B. has taken that up another notch of his conditioning, his ability to essentially chase down and guard guys, like I said, 90 feet from the basket.

That's just another way that, obviously, besides his scoring and things like that, that he can positively impact the game that gives us the best chance to win.

**Q. Can you talk about the impact Kristaps has had on both ends? How will this team have to adjust playing this Mavs team if he's unavailable for Game 3?**

JAYSON TATUM: We're just so much of a better team when we have him. 7-4 unicorn, right? He's as talented as they come. Presents so many matchup problems on the offensive end. Then on the defensive end, somebody that can affect shots, protect the rim as well as he does.

So, yes, we've had success and found ways to win without him. Obviously, we're better when he's on the team, when he's out there playing with us.

Obviously, he's day to day, doing everything he can to get out there and give us whatever he can.

**Q. Back to shooting. You've come along as a playmaker and manager the last few years. Has it been freeing from the pressure that you put on yourself that you don't need to rely on scoring efficiently to make a major impact on the game?**

JAYSON TATUM: I don't want to put us in the predicament where it's like I'm shooting not as well, still we can win. I want to shoot the ball well.

But I feel I just keep saying it. That's not the only thing that

I bring to the table, not being defined by that. Earlier in my career, I was a score the ball and rebound type of guy. How much I've grown and developed as a player, reading the game, understanding what the defense is trying to take away, giving up.

It's such a long season that you're not going to make every shot. You're not going to shoot as well as you would like to. The guys that I've studied, the best of the best players, have always just found a way. That's just all I've been trying to do, is find a way to do whatever I can.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

