

# NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Dallas Mavericks

Kyrie Irving

Game 3: Postgame



Boston Celtics 106, Dallas Mavericks 99

**Q. Kyrie, feels like Boston in this series is doing everything they can away to take away corner threes. What do you feel like now three games in, is there a counter to that for you guys?**

KYRIE IRVING: I mean, they're a good team. They're going to make adjustments. They know how much of our offense over the Playoff run has been predicated on getting easy looks for our bigs.

They've been taking it away, putting guards on the bigs, not really helping off of them. A lot of one-on-one defense.

It's about us finishing and hopefully that creates some space where we can throw a lob.

**Q. When Luka fouled out, what was the mindset of the team? Did you feel like at that time you had to take over the game?**

KYRIE IRVING: I mean, I don't think I really had a choice. It was unfortunate that the foul was called. Luka picked up his fifth and sixth in a matter of a three-minute or two-minute span. It's tough.

We still had to figure out a way to win the basketball game. We put our best foot forward, especially being down 21. We easily could have packed up and folded.

But we didn't give up. We kept playing. The guys that were out there, we kept competing. Felt like we gave ourselves a chance to win down the stretch.

They obviously made some big plays, some big shots. So you got to give them credit. But we got to play the way we played being down 21 the whole, entire game, playing with that pace, playing with that pride. That's what's got us here today.

But when you're going against a good juggernaut offensive

team like the Boston Celtics, they're going to make you pay for mistakes. You got to give them credit.

**Q. When Luka did foul out, you know what you have to do. The building kind of sagged. Did you search your teammates' faces and body language to make sure they were up for what was left of this game?**

KYRIE IRVING: Yeah, but it was a quick look. I mean, we're in the NBA Finals. I'm not really thinking I've got to tell my guys we still have a chance to win the game, we're only down by three points.

But yeah, I think probably in that stretch, I definitely could have done a better job of just settling them for what's coming. Jrue was picking me up full court. They knew they were going to pressure me to get the ball out of my hands.

I just tried to make the right plays, make sure guys were in the right spots, have them understand that we still have a chance to win this basketball game. That was all I was thinking. Just even before Luka fouled out, just the way we started off the fourth quarter, giving up those two baskets where they went up 21.

Again, we could have folded but we kept playing.

**Q. It's been shared that teams when they go up 3-0 no one's come back from that. What is Kyrie Irving's mindset on staying positive within himself and the team to push this to a seven-game series?**

KYRIE IRVING: Man, I just really think about going home. This is a metaphor here. Just be ready (smiling). Just go home, get the ammo ready, get the bazooka, the 50 cal ready. Get everything ready, because when we come into Game 4, we know we got to shoot our shots and we got to do it with an aggression.

Defensively, we got to finish to do the things that creates that separation for us when we're playing against them. They shoot a lot of tough threes. They really rely on their three-point shot to create that separation for themselves, obviously to create that comfortability.



We just got to stay positive. For me personally, again, I'm going home, dusting off the tools and just getting ready for a tough Game 4.

**Q. Luka is dealing with a lot of injuries right now. He has this massive offensive workload. What have you seen from his struggles defensively with how often Boston is targeting him?**

KYRIE IRVING: It's not the first time a team has tried to target Luka on the defensive end. So for us, we're just trying to put a great shell defense around not only him, but the rest of the team.

It's going to be a great defensive challenge for anybody to guard Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown. You have other guys that are playing roles that are pretty much great team roles they fulfilled. Jrue Holiday, Al Horford, they're great offensive players too, but when you have those guys on the backside making decisions, playing high IQ, they're going to make you pay for your mistakes.

Then you got you Derrick White catching the ball by his waist or above his head and still shooting the threes and making timely threes.

Again, you got to give them credit. Still, we have a belief that we can win one game at a time and take this series a little bit further.

**Q. You had 15 assists. Do you think your ball movement was significantly better to get a higher number, or are they guarding you too well?**

KYRIE IRVING: That's a great question. I think when you see us out there, there are a lot of shots at the rim that are contested by one person or two people. I think at this point it's more of a pride thing for us to go and finish.

When we have a one-on-one matchup, we feel like we can take advantage of it. That could be part of their game plan where while we're out there, I can hear them yelling certain things like, Don't contest it, let them play one-on-one.

There's a little bit of cat-and-mouse going on just seeing if we can finish our shots. I feel like we're getting great looks, and we just got to convert them.

**Q. Dereck Lively, he talked about his Game 1 and 2 were not his best. He's a 20-year-old who has played more minutes at his age than anybody in NBA Finals history. What you saw from him in Game 3, the way he rallied, is that just another step of maturity, another step he has made in this impressive rookie season of his?**

KYRIE IRVING: For sure. For sure. The journey is the reward. I always told him this mission is bigger than us. It's just not solely focused on this year. We have a future together where we're going to continue to grow as teammates. For him to take accountability like that after Game 2, to be 20 years old, that's a big step.

I definitely wasn't there emotionally or mature-wise. He definitely deserves his flowers. He rallied us tonight. Came to the bench and just told us to keep believing. When you have one of the youngest team on the team, if not the youngest guy on the team speaking like that, one of two choices. We can either follow his lead and continue to ride his energy, or we fold up. I think that we made the former choice, and we kept playing and kept competing. Just wasn't enough.

But I got to give a big shut out to D Live for keeping us at bay and keeping us at peace. That was special. That was special. Those are moments that you remember forever and you carry on as a team that can help you down the line.

**Q. Late in the third quarter, I think the shot distribution between you and Luka was 20 apiece, and the rest of the guys had three each. Given how the cat and mouse that you talked about, what are you seeing out there that could be done differently?**

KYRIE IRVING: We just got to convert. I feel like we're getting a lot of shots that we like. When you have Luka going against Payton Pritchard or D White in the post, somebody else in the post, we feel really good about it.

Now isn't the time to hold our head on not converting shots that we normally have made a majority of this playoff run. We just got to keep attacking.

Nights like tonight, you kind of could expect that we were going to be very aggressive. We want to win. Our teammates want to win alongside us. For us, we just got to convert and be more efficient, see where it goes from there.

**Q. Obviously a frustrating night for Luka, especially having to watch the last four-plus minutes. What do you say to him tonight?**

KYRIE IRVING: You just got to let it breathe a little bit. Let the human emotions come out. Just give him a hug. That's it, man.

It's easy to point the finger at just him, say, you could be better. That's easy to say. I think he knows that.

But, yeah, it's reiterating that I have his back, we all have his back. It's a tough game. It was a tough call. We could have probably done a little bit something different on his fifth foul just to give us a little bit more of a grace period to set our defense and get him on a matchup.

But hindsight is 20/20. We have to wash our hands of this and get ready for Game 4.

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