

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Thursday, June 13, 2024

Boston Celtics

Jayson Tatum

Practice Day



Q. Jayson, what do you think has changed about your mentality, not just the X's and O's of why you're on the precipice, one game away from winning the NBA Finals?

JAYSON TATUM: I think from our experiences over the past couple of years, the thing that we've really gotten a lot better at is not relaxing, not being complacent. From game to game or series to series, we always want more.

Maybe in recent years we took things for granted at some points or were happy to make it to certain rounds, where (now) we're not satisfied.

Even now up 3-0, nobody is celebrating or anything. We still feel like there's a lot more that we can do. There's a lot more that we want to do.

From that standpoint, just not being complacent and everybody just wanting more and being true to that.

Q. Jayson, what do you remember about that first Summer League you played with Jaylen when you became his teammate for the first time and what it was like getting to know his game and just playing together for that first time and how that's grown since then?

JAYSON TATUM: You said Summer League? I was excited to finally put on an NBA jersey. I was young. I was 19. I was overwhelmed. Everything was new to me, from being at the new practice facility.

I remember going through Summer League practice with -- JB was on the team, obviously, and learning from him and learning from the assistant coaches. Jerome Allen was there; Micah Shrewsberry was one of the coaches. It was a hell of an experience, in Utah and in Vegas.

I was just so happy to be in the NBA at the time that -- I was really a kid. It was a great experience, and obviously we've grown a lot since then. But I was just so happy to be there and put on that jersey for the first time.

Q. Jrue talked the other day about looking up at the banners and thinking he'd like to be part of one. You've been around it a while. You've been kind of absorbed into what it means to be a Celtic. What would that mean to you now, and how much is that something that you've thought of, and how much has that evolved over your career?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, ever since I've been in the NBA, especially with the Celtics, everybody knows we only hang up championship banners, and it's been a while since we've won one. Ever since '08, the goal is to win another one every single year. Gotten close plenty of times.

It's just an honor. It's a honor to wear this jersey. It's an honor to follow in the footsteps of some of the best players ever. Being a part of Celtics history entails that you've got to win a championship. Every kid growing up playing basketball dreams about being in the Finals, dreams about winning a championship. I'm no different than anybody else.

Q. Jaylen was in here earlier talking about how he was embarrassed about the way last year ended for himself personally. That was a motivation for him over the summer coming into the season. You've obviously talked about spraining your ankle, not being able to be 100 percent in that game, the way that series ended. How much has not just last year but the last several years helped you locked in on the moment and not letting this opportunity slip away this year?

JAYSON TATUM: I credited last year a lot to the success that we're having this season. We were so consumed with getting back to the Finals, in a good way, but I think especially when we got to the Playoffs, we were just ready to get back to June. In some ways skipping steps.

Those series took longer than they maybe should have, and we acknowledge that. We could have closed games out a lot earlier.

You find yourself in a hole down 0-3, the margin for error is so small. Last year, we really believed that we could take it one game at a time and come back from that series.

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

But last year was a great learning experience. For one, to not take things for granted. You're never promised to make it back to the Finals. I think each and every person this year has come into the season with a different mindset. I think it has truly shown that we don't take things for granted, and we approach every single day the same.

We're trying to get better, and we're as hungry as we've ever been.

Q. Back to the banners, when you're a newly minted Celtic, how does that work? Does somebody take you around and show you all that and teach that to you? Or are you on your own? Also, what was your first encounter with a Celtics legend, whether it was Larry Bird or Bob Cousy or somebody?

JAYSON TATUM: Actually, yeah, somebody did walk me around the old practice facility in Waltham and showed me all the banners and the history.

I was born in '98, so I didn't really know about all the championships before. I knew Bill Russell won a lot. I knew Bird had a couple. But I only ever saw '08, and then when they lost in 2010. I learned a lot about the history of the game, the history of the Celtics.

I would say the first legend I met was Paul Pierce. I met him during that -- it might have been Summer League or my first training camp he was around for a few days. That was the first Celtics legend I really got to talk to.

Q. Following up on your answer of really being in the moment and not letting things slip away, what do you think has contributed to you guys' ability this season to take advantage of close-out opportunities?

JAYSON TATUM: I think our ability to go over situational basketball during practice. Joe and the coaching staff, they do a great job of showing us a lot of different things throughout the season of how games end, whether it's teams being up six, do you foul, or closing out quarters and how that can have an effect for the start of the next quarter.

So going over situational basketball in practice and in shootarounds and understanding what we want to do in those moments, what plays and reads we want to go over in late-game situations, so when those moments do come about throughout the game, we're comfortable. We know what we're trying to run, what we're trying to get to, the different options from each set.

Just our ability to translate the things that we go over in practice to the game and do it without skipping a beat.

Q. You've mentioned Celtic history a few times today, obviously. Obviously it would be cool enough to hang an 18th banner. I get that's the bigger thing. But there's never been a Celtic team with a better playoff record than you guys have at this point. You guys have a chance to be second-best Celtic team ever in terms of record. How much more would that add to it when you think of all this franchise has done?

JAYSON TATUM: I didn't know that. That would be really cool. But you know, you guys will probably say we didn't play anybody to get here. So we'll just have to do it again next year.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.