

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Friday, June 14, 2024

Dallas Mavericks

Coach Jason Kidd

Game 4: Pregame



Q. What's the message to your guys going into this Game 4, and how do you, I guess, keep their minds off of the 3-0 deficit, or is it something that you want them to embrace and just take it?

JASON KIDD: Yeah, I think that's a really good question in the sense of the talk is, you know, no different than 1, 2 or 3. You know, we have a game plan. We've got to play faster. We've got to guard the three.

The series numbers, I think we all understand what that is. So it's not so much that we are going to harp on that but understanding that we've got to play 40 minutes of our best basketball tonight, and that's what we're talking about.

Q. Which one is more accurate, do you think, that because you know where the series is, is that freeing mentally in some ways, or is it just pressure of the back against the wall and you have to win tonight to extend this thing?

JASON KIDD: Yeah, I think when you talk about the record or the series is 3-0, somewhere in this game, there's going to be a point where either team is going to have to make a stand or they let go of the rope.

And so that's just human nature. And so if it happens to be us in the sense we are down or we're fighting to get back in the game, there's going to be a point, if there's going to be a fight, or do we just concede.

Or vice versa, where Boston goes, we've got another one on Monday. That's what -- there will be a point in this game where someone is going to have to make a stand or they let go especially of the rope. We'll see when that point comes.

Q. There's been a lot of discussion about the areas in which you guys have fallen just short in a couple of these games. I'm wondering, though, what are the things that you've been encouraged by that you're seen from your team that have been close right down

to the wire?

JASON KIDD: I think when you talk about the three games, getting off to a good start is one, and then the fight at the end. You know, we're playing from behind, and we have to play perfect. These are positive things.

But again, we have to play with pace. And somewhere between the second quarter and third quarter we tend to just walk the ball, and that's the benefit to Boston. Tonight we have to leave the -- the gas tank has to be empty at the pace of not walking but running for 48 minutes.

Q. Luka said in the interview with ESPN that he would probably have to take another painkiller [shot] before this game. What has it been like to watch him navigate carrying this load and also dealing with the injury and kind of learning a whole bunch of hard lessons at once?

JASON KIDD: Yeah, I think -- I don't get involved with the medical. So I just repeat questionable or probable or whatever he's taking.

So I let that -- that's between medical and the player. So I can't comment about what -- if he taking a shot.

But injuries are part of the game, and it's June. Everybody's sore and tired mentally. And so it's about survival. It's about being able to understand if you've been here before, you have to train to play to June. And so these are a lot of lessons, not just for Luka but a lot of my guys are learning.

And so, you know, tonight, injury or no injury, we have to go out there and play our best basketball and find a way to win. And Luka has been incredible up to this point, and has still been incredible. For whatever reason, there has been some personal attacks on him, but he will learn from them and he will be better when he comes back from it.

Q. You need more points from the players on the bench, and those guys never really had like a Finals already or were in that situation before. How do you encourage them, if they are in the situation, to take a shot, to take -- really to encourage them to take those

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shots, and that you finally get some more points from the bench?

JASON KIDD: Great question. I think when you talk about our bench, we need everybody to score. And then when you talk about our team, we need everybody to score more points. It's not just our bench. It's not just Luka and Ky scoring. We need everybody to pitch in.

We are getting great looks. Unfortunately we just haven't made them. So tonight hopefully is the night that everybody will be able to score.

But our bench has been, you know, someone that has helped us win in the playoffs, and we are going to need them tonight. Someone off the bench, Maxi, D-Live, Josh, Exum, someone has to be able to step up and make an open shot for us tonight, and we truly believe that will happen.

Q. Is there a particular personal attack or narrative around Luka that specifically bothers you? And as a player who went through all of this himself and personal attacks, how have you helped guide him through that?

JASON KIDD: Yeah, I think when you look at today's athlete, the game of sport is not to be perfect. It's just, you know, to win. And when you look at what's come out here in the last day or so, if you've watched the Mavs, Luka has improved his defense. But we are asking him, or some are asking him, to be a shutdown defender.

Well, he's never been on an All-Defensive Team, but he's been on five All-Pro Teams, first team. So that means he's one of the top five players in the world, and he's playing the game the right way where he can find open guys.

But when you're on the biggest stage, there's got to be -- someone's got to poke a hole. This will only make the great ones better. When you look at, we talked about it yesterday, with LeBron, Michael, the greats, the G.O.A.T.s, they all were poked at and they came back stronger and better.

I truly believe Luka will come back stronger and better. Some criticize that he could never get this far. But he's here. And unfortunately as a team, he said it best: We win together and we lose together. And that's -- we lost three in a row. We are trying to find a way tonight to win.

But sometimes when you are a free agent in the media business, you've got to say something crazy to get a new contract, or likes, or clicks.

Q. I was going to ask about your personal attack comment. Is there one thing that you felt was over the line? I guess you kind of alluded to it just now.

JASON KIDD: No, I think it's just everybody has -- this is a free country. Everybody has the right to their opinion.

It's just sometimes we might take it a little bit too far, right, and understanding if you put yourself in that person's shoes, could you stand up to the barbecue, right?

Sometimes we want to fry someone, but if you reversed it, and it was you being fried, would you like it? Most likely not, right. That's just the nature of the business.

But this young man has done nothing to anyone but play the game of basketball. And when he's asked the question, he's never run from it. He's answered it. And he's 25 years old.

You know, I think that's what I'm more disappointed in is that we are at the highest stage where we have one of the best players in the world playing the game the right way but we want to criticize some of the things that he does not do well. But when he does do them well, we are going to come back and want to talk to him, and then when he says no, I'm going to pass, then what happens, right.

I think sometimes it's just unfair or unwarranted to say those things. No one in this room is perfect, right. So, like, give my man a break. Let him play the game. Because we are all here to watch him play, right, and so let's just enjoy it. He's 25 years old. He will be better. Hopefully he's better tonight (laughter).

Q. We have seen Luka improve on defense, without question. I know there has been criticism of his defense, but we've seen him work hard on that end of the floor. My question is: Do you think tonight -- because the guys have seen him do that all year -- do you expect him to have, I know the Finals, they have motivation, but extra motivation to play for him in that sense?

JASON KIDD: Yeah, I think this is a special group when you talk about that group in that locker room. They protect one another. They play for one another. They play the game the right way. They cheer for one another.

And so is there extra? I don't think there's going to be extra. I think the motivation right now is to get off to a good start and find a way to get a win.

But nothing changes about the way the group feels about Luka. Tonight I expect everybody to play their A Game. I

think sometimes we -- you know, the Celtics are a good team. Let's not forget that. It's not that we are not playing defense or it's been blowouts. It's just been a couple mistakes that they have taken advantage of that we will learn from as we go forward, and if we are ever in this situation again, hopefully we can use that experience.

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