

# NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Sunday, June 16, 2024

**Boston Celtics**

**Coach Joe Mazzulla**

Practice Day



**Q. Joe, you have an opportunity to be part of a very special fraternity of coaches here in Boston that have won titles, talking about legends like Red Auerbach, Bill Russell, K.C. Jones. What would it mean for you personally? You always talk about it's all about the players, but you're a young coach. What would it mean for you personally to be a part of that?**

JOE MAZZULLA: That will never happen if you don't run back on defense, rebound, execute and get to your spacing. That's the most important thing.

**Q. You said the other day that Kristaps was making progress, and obviously went through that workout before the game. The last couple days, has he continued to make progress and is there hope he can do more today?**

JOE MAZZULLA: I haven't talked to him yet. Going to talk about that before we start at 2:00. So I'm not sure kind of where he's at. But he's trying and doing everything he can to try to put himself in position to be out there. I know that for sure.

**Q. You talked in the past about your different side of your upbringing. Can you talk about your Italian side and how that shaped the person and coach that you became?**

JOE MAZZULLA: You're just made by all the experiences and things that you have. Regardless of what I am, what I'm made from, first and foremost, my identity, Christ is the most important thing before all that. And after that, it's about winning for the Boston Celtics and the process of winning -- getting back on defense, playing hard, transition, rebounding, spacing, execution. Those things are the most important.

**Q. How much of what you do defensively, especially with regard to help, is strictly game plan based and how much is based on trusting your players' instincts and them trusting the players behind them?**

JOE MAZZULLA: It's a good question. Multiple layers to that. Obviously it's game plan, execution, and that can change once the game begins. One side of the ball is heavily dictated by the other.

I think one of the things that we've freed our minds to this year is just making reads and having an understanding, having a spatial awareness about who is where, what's the spacing, what's the attack and just being able to make plays on both ends of the floor there.

So there's definitely obviously a game plan component. You have to have a plan going into it. But at the end of the day, it's the individual pride, and then it's the instincts from the guy when they are out there.

**Q. What did you see from Game 4? It was such a bizarre performance. Not getting the 50/50 balls, not dominating the boards. Seems like you guys were a couple of steps slow and seemed like it was mental, also. What did you take from that, and how can you use that as motivation or a way to make adjustments in Game 5?**

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I mean, every game, regardless of how it goes, there's always stuff that you can learn from and there's always stuff that you don't learn from. Regardless, I think the most important thing is our process toward getting better has been the same whether we have won or lost, whether we have won big or lost big.

We have always tried to find the 10 or 12 possessions we can get better at and find the things we did pretty well and how can we do those more. I just kept a consistent process toward our postgame retrieval, and then how we grow with that heading into the next game.

**Q. I saw Dallas increase the speed of their game in Game 4. Do you think controlling the rhythm is one of the keys to the game?**

JOE MAZZULLA: When they are at their best, the team that dictates the pace dictates kind of the momentum and the opportunities. So yeah, I think that's definitely part of it, is how can we dictate the pace of the game and how can



we dictate the momentum of the game. You can do that in different ways. Transition is obviously one of those, but there's other ways you can do that as well.

I think there are some tactical things that you have to do depending upon how the game is going, for sure.

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**Q. You said coming into the series, adjustments would be dictated by points per possession, points per play. Was there any area in particular that their offense is going to kind of force you to adjust going forward based on what happened last game?**

JOE MAZZULLA: I mean, it just depends. I think they played a well-balanced offensive game from everybody. The game is connected, and so if you are not doing one thing well, going to something different may not always stop that.

Just have to be open-minded. Every game takes on a life of its own. We have the things that we can control and then we have the things that we have to be ready to adjust to kind of depending upon how the game goes over the course of time.

**Q. Derrick always seemed even-keeled for you guys. Curious what you think his stability, his calmness has given you guys throughout this playoff run?**

JOE MAZZULLA: Just a guy defined by the ability to make plays on both ends. Like you said, mistakes don't weigh him down. Doesn't matter if he misses a shot or makes a mistake on the defensive end. Just has the ability to make plays and he can do them on both ends of the floor. That balance of impacting the game in different ways is crucial for us.

**Q. Happy Father's Day.**

JOE MAZZULLA: Thank you.

**Q. Offensive execution, was that a problem in the previous game? I know how you talked about the games that you're connected.**

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah.

**Q. At this point in the series, is it a battle of wills as much as anything?**

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, definitely. I think some of our defensive struggles came from our offensive struggles, no question, and vice versa. There's definitely some things we need to do better on the offensive end.

What was the second question you had? It's a little bit of both. I think obviously that is, I would say, 1A is the willpower, the mindset, the approach that you bring into it.

