

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Sunday, June 16, 2024

Boston Celtics

Jayson Tatum

Practice Day



Q. Jaylen was talking about his history with Boston and everywhere you look, you see a Celtics jersey or people. Does that somehow rise the pressure above you guys, the expectations that this city puts on you?

JAYSON TATUM: I don't look at it as pressure. I do notice, especially this time of the season, playoff time and obviously being in the Finals for the second time. When you drive around and go to the gas station, or I wanted to go get some ice cream yesterday, it's Celtics gear everywhere and everybody is super excited about this team and what we have accomplished and what we have the chance to accomplish.

You really just feel the love and support from everybody in the city of Boston, and how bad they want us to win, how much they have been cheering for us.

So I don't look at it as pressure. Just unconditional support, and that we have an amazing fan base here.

Q. Sort of along those lines, but there's a unique expectation here in Boston. Maybe it's in L.A., too, but those are the only two places where it is. As a young player, how did you learn to navigate that space and go, Okay, this is what I signed up for, and I have to live in this space throughout my career here?

JAYSON TATUM: It did take some time. For one, normally, when you're a top five draft pick, you go to a lottery team that is rebuilding. I was in a unique situation from the rest of the guys in my draft class in that the Celtics were the No. 1 seed in the East before. We were competing for a championship ever since I've gotten here.

It brings me back to my earlier years. I would talk to guys in my draft class, and they were losing 15 games in a row. And me, I'm fighting for the 1 seed, and I'm on a veteran team that's trying to win.

When you come into the NBA, you just think every organization, every franchise is the same. That couldn't be

any further from the truth. I've been fortunate to be a part of something that is special, that has had some of the greatest players to ever play wear this uniform. You realize early on that it's an honor and it raises your level of commitment, I felt like, to this city and to this franchise.

Q. Kind of along those same lines, how long does it take for a 19-year-old, like we joked that you were 19 for like five years. But how long, when you're drafted at 19, to understand the pressure that comes with 17 banners and the retired jerseys and everything else? Because at that age, I can only assume that you know the recent history. You don't know 1960s Celtics and what that means. So how long does it take to you understand the totality of it all?

JAYSON TATUM: I would say just throughout that season. I had no idea who Cedric Maxwell was. I thought he was just like a radio guy (laughter). I didn't know that he played on the team, and he won Finals MVP.

So there were just different instances throughout the season in my rookie year where I would learn about different people that played an intricate part in this organization -- the history throughout the Celtics and what the Celtics mean to the game of basketball. You just grow a level of appreciation through your time here.

Q. Since it's Father's Day, when you got to the league, you were raising a son at the same time. How has that helped you understand responsibility and all the other things that come with leading a franchise over the course of that time?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. When I found out that I was going to be a dad, I was still in college. I had like a week or two left. I wasn't ecstatic. I was a little selfish at that point because I knew that I was about to go chase my dream and be in the NBA. I felt like that was going to affect what people thought of me, affect where I went in the draft.

So I'd be the first to say I wasn't like super thrilled to find out I was going to be a dad, and quickly realized that it was like the best thing that ever could have happened to me. There's nothing better than being a dad.



I think, especially for me and my first year in the NBA at 19, it taught me a sense of responsibility. Because it's tough, being 19 years old and coming into fame and this newfound fortune. Nobody can, I guess, help you or prepare you for what it's like to be 19 and have millions of dollars.

And I think -- not that I think. I know that having Deuce at that age grounded me. Because whatever decision I wanted to make, I had to make sure that he was taken care of. I couldn't just up and go or do everything that some of my peers were doing because I had to go home and put him to bed. Or for Father's Day weekend I was going out of town or -- I had to skip out on this trip with my friends because it was my weekend with him.

Not that it's a sacrifice. I willingly would choose those things. But it has taught me a sense of responsibility, as well as just making the right decisions. Knowing that there's a six-year-old mini me essentially watching everything that I do and knowing that I have to be the best version of myself. I have to make the right decisions because he's always watching.

Q. Joe Mazzulla has a unique style of coaching. Sam Hauser said sometimes he puts videos for you of killer whales and hyenas, stuff like that. Could you elaborate, and did he put anything like that after the Game 4 loss?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, I think after Game 4, he just reminded us to have fun. We wanted to go for the kill, essentially, and we wanted to win so bad that maybe we got away from what makes us special and what makes us the Boston Celtics.

Today, just reminded each guy why he's important to this team and why we all need each other and what a person brings to the table. I think that was really important for us to go over today.

Q. When you go up 3-0, everything is talked about inevitability. You're crowned without being crowned yet. Did any of that seep into the Game 4 performance where you just said you wanted to win so bad because you know this is the moment? Did that seep into it? Did that change how you guys saw the game and the decisions you guys were making on the floor?

JAYSON TATUM: I don't think we came out and expected that we were going to come out and roll over on it and win. I firmly believe we had the right intentions. We wanted to win. We wanted to play the right way. That moment -- we wanted that moment.

But I think we maybe put too much pressure on ourselves at that moment to be perfect or think it was going to go how we wanted it to go.

Joe did a great job today of reminding us that it's okay to smile during wars. It's okay to have fun during high-pressure moments. That's what makes our team unique and special.

We would love to win tomorrow, more than anything. But if it doesn't happen, it's not the end of the world. We have more opportunities. So just setting that table of don't surrender to that idea that we have to win tomorrow. We would love to, absolutely. But Game 5 is the biggest game of the season because it's the next game on the schedule.

So going with that mindset, and just have fun. That's really what we talked about today. Get back to having fun and being a team and how special we are and the team that got us here.

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