

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Friday, June 13, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Mark Daigneault

Game 4: Pregame

Q. Obviously Indy, it felt like last game spent as much energy as they have all series trying to slow Shai. I know you didn't do anything yesterday, between the film and the walk-through, are you emphasizing maybe other outlets for Shai?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I think if you look at their previous series, when they come home, that tends to be the mode they get in in terms of the pressure. I thought we were prepared for that. I thought we attacked it well for portions of the game. We had really good stretches. And didn't attack it well enough for enough of the game.

That's the challenge to them. We know they are going to pressure again. They've been pretty consistent with that. We think we have some solutions to that, but we got to go do it. We've got to have the will to have more force than they have pressure and physicality in the perimeter.

Q. So the crossmatch with Pascal has been a big motivator of what the Pacers are trying to attack through. What have you made of how you've operated that in the series?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: On our defense, correct?

Q. Yes.

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Mixed. I think we've had really good moments against him and limited his impact at different times. I thought in Game 3 they came out very, very focused on getting him going. He's a really good player. We've learned in the previous series with All-Star-level players, you can do a good job on them, but you're not holding them down for the course of a series. He's no exception. Haliburton is no exception. Their team is no exception.

We have to just continue to make them earn everything. I think generally over three games we've done a decent job of that. The most important game is Game 4. We have to do it again.



Q. What do you need from a force standpoint up top on their screening action? They have multiple guys up there, not always setting a screen, they're kind of flying out. How do you deal with all of that action in terms of the discipline and the force that you need?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: They set a lot of those. They slip out of more screens than any team in the NBA. So they're not always setting. The volume of screens you're dealing with them against them is very, very high. I think they set 111 in Game 3, which is the high of this series.

Being able to neutralize advantages, you're not going to be perfect with 111 of anything, but neutralize as many advantages as we can that takes great effort, focus, everything. That's what we've done all season is build those muscles. We have to now apply those in Game 4.

Q. The Pacers made many successful cuts in the last game. What is your focus plan for protecting the rim tonight?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Well, they start with advantages usually. So usually those plays are downstream from an initial advantage. So similar type of answer that I just gave, which is you try to neutralize their advantages as much as possible. That can be transition. That can be in the pick-and-roll game. It could be any other way they try to do it, post-ups.

But when you allow advantages, there's like a Siakam post-up, we allowed a deep catch in transition, and Mathurin gets a cut to that point. A lot of time it's less about the cut but what created the initial advantage. But we are trying to take away as much as we can against a good team.

Q. The 111, is that 111 screens for Haliburton? You said that's the most in the series. What's a normal number?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: First of all, it's not Haliburton, it's their team. The amount of times two guys came together in a screening action. Their average coming in was probably mid 90s. So, the 111 is very high. Some of that's

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a good thing because it means you're forcing them to go multiple on a possession. I think it just speaks to the volume of pressure they're putting on you in the pick-and-roll game.

Q. When you're defending a guy like Tyrese, how does it challenge you? He jumps in the air to pass. You don't teach that as a kid growing up.

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, I think all the great players -- and he's a great player -- there is a level of unconventionality? Is that a word? This is the right room to ask [smiling]. There's a level of unconventionality to the great players.

It takes some getting used to. That's the beauty of a series. But whether it's like the twitch of Anthony Edwards or Jokic's mastery of the passing, posting, all his stuff, you got to learn it as you go in the series. That's why as emotional as the wins and losses are, we really want to try to improve through the series. As the series goes, you have the opportunity to do that. Part of that improvement is learning the opponent and what it feels like to defend them.

He is an unorthodox player and a great player.

Q. Do you think it helped that you just had the one free day in between Game 3 and 4? Can you share the biggest takeaway after watching film, how these turnovers happened that you maybe can share how to avoid those?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, the one day is what it is. It's the same for both teams. Coming off of that, we're excited to play tonight. We're glad we're playing tonight.

The turnovers, I mean, we've been pretty clean there. It's a balance. You want to address the things that are problematic, but you also don't want to overreact to individual games. We've been very, very clean with our turnovers all season, and even in these Playoffs.

We looked at some of them. But again, we're not going to chase our shadow in these situations. We're just taking everything we can from the previous games to do the best we can in Game 4. That's what our focus is.

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