

NBA All-Star 3-Point Contest

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Damian Lillard

Press Conference



Q. Dame, we'll start with the end. You needed one ball on the last rack. A couple teammates have already thought you waited to the last ball on purpose. Walk us through the end of that and winning your second in a row.

DAMIAN LILLARD: I knew, once I got to that three-point ball, the deep one, I could win it if I knock these down and just give myself an advantage going into my bonus rack right there before that last one. So I knew I had a good chance.

When I got to the final rack, I didn't know my exact score, but when I missed a couple, I heard the crowd just oohing and aahing. Once they kept doing it over and over, I knew I was still alive because I knew they would have stopped if it had been over for me.

The next two balls, I missed again, and then I grabbed the next one and I knew I needed that to win.

Q. (No microphone)?

DAMIAN LILLARD: Last year the final round was a much lower score to win. Like nobody really shot the ball great. So that one was fun obviously winning the first one.

This one I thought everybody shot at a pretty high clip in the first round, the tie-breaking round, and the final round. Everybody like shot well. This one was a little bit more fun, I guess a little bit more rewarding because we had to really shoot it in to win.

That's what feels good, doing it two times in a row.

Q. How much did you feel like just the champ's advantage going last helped you out, knowing the numbers you need throughout the contest?

DAMIAN LILLARD: I think it's an advantage because you can see a target, know what you've got to get to. You're not shooting just aimlessly where someone can come behind me and beat this score. You either have a chance to beat it or you're going to fall short.

I think that's the only advantage that it is, is just knowing. You can still go out there and miss. I like that advantage because I can see it and I can -- as a shooter, you have to tighten up and be sharp and try to hunt somebody down if it comes down to it. So I think it helped me for sure.

Q. In the lead-up to this, we talked to Malik [Beasley] a lot about how he was preparing. I don't remember actually talking to you about how you were preparing. So how did you go about this?

DAMIAN LILLARD: I didn't prepare at all. I think that's the key to it. I kept telling Bease, look, the first two times I did it, I was practicing. I had racks. I was doing all this stuff and trying to get ready for it, and I went out there and just didn't win.

Last year I went in there, I never practiced, never shot off a rack. I didn't do nothing, just showed up and won.

So this year I was telling him, you're trying too hard. You're doing all this practicing. You're talking about it a lot. Just show up and just shoot. I think that's what's going to be best because, when you practice and all that, you're just constantly thinking about it, and that was it. But I didn't practice at all.

Q. This is only kind of semi-related to the 3-Point Contest, but you obviously helped shift the NBA with just the value and the deep threes that you take. What do you think it is right now with the scoring surges we're seeing? You had a 70-point game last year. What is it about the surges we're seeing where the defense hasn't caught up to the new evolution of the offenses?

DAMIAN LILLARD: I think it's easy to see the defense in the league, but if you look at the pace of the game now compared to how it was just a few years ago, it's a much faster paced game, and teams are also shooting a lot more threes. You've got a lot more guys on the floor that can make threes, that can make deep threes.

Those things considered, it's going to lead to some high scoring. So I think that's what it comes down to.



Q. I know it's theater lighting, so I don't know if the 67,000-seat arena affected sight lines, but also you all had the green reflection on the court.

DAMIAN LILLARD: There was a lot going on.

Q. What did that look like, feel like? What was that sort of adjustment?

DAMIAN LILLARD: I think my first shot on every rim was either really short or to the left or to the right because your depth perception is a little bit off. You see a crowd in front of you, but to my right is like way out there. I can just see like a crowd way up high, far away. So it just threw me off a little bit.

Then I just settled in. Then another time I was running from, I think, the corner to the wing, and as I was running, I was trying to look down to where the line is, and there was like some stuff going on. I might have just shot standing on the line. I probably didn't get all the way behind it because I didn't know where I was at on the floor, and it kind of confused me for a second.

I don't think it really distracted me that much from shooting. I think everybody kind of tuned it out at some point, but I'm sure everybody had a moment where something happened and it threw them off a little bit.

Q. You've been hot before, scored 60 points. You know when you enter into the zone, that rhythm. Do you feel the same rhythm in this type of atmosphere and especially today?

DAMIAN LILLARD: Yeah. I mean, in games there's people guarding you. You're running around. You're a little more tired, and you still can get into that rhythm. But as a shooter, sometimes when I'm working out, I might hit 50 threes in a row once I keep seeing the ball go in and it's the same motion over and over.

So when it's like repetition, you just kind of turn, and once you get comfortable with that motion, it becomes an easy shot and you can get into that zone pretty easily.

Q. You got the chance to come down and visit Australia a couple years ago. What were your favorite things, and do you think we'll ever get to see you back there?

DAMIAN LILLARD: My favorite thing, I went to the zoo, and they let me watch them feed the lions. It was crazy. Like I saw them in the cage. It was. They let me watch them feed them, and the lions saw the food coming, but

they were still in the cage, and they started kind of roaring a little bit.

I was probably as far as I am from you from the cage, and my chest was vibrating because it was just so powerful. It was like -- it was crazy. That was a great experience.

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