

Emirates NBA Cup

Saturday, December 14, 2024

Milwaukee Bucks

Doc Rivers

Semifinal Postgame



Milwaukee Bucks - 110, Atlanta Hawks - 102

Q. Pregame you talked about an improved defense. What did you like down the stretch when maybe there weren't many buckets for you all but they were kind of stuck on 100 and you were able to string together stops there?

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, I just thought our help defense, I thought that that block -- I mean, how many times did you see that lob get blocked? I think we got two of them today.

So we drilled it all day yesterday, and we have the capable players who can do it, between Brook and Bobby and Giannis. I mean, those are the type of guys that can go get that. I thought they did a great job of doing that.

Q. What did you think of Brook being able to hold up in that two-man game with Trae? It's always going to be difficult. I know you guys were throwing a lot of guys at Trae; just the kind of the job you did on him?

DOC RIVERS: He's tough, man. I thought we did a great job. We really wanted to try to take away a big assist night for him. He had 10 still, but our game plan was to try to make him play against one-on-one instead of going downhill.

I thought Trae deserves a lot of credit because he fought over screens and it turned into iso one-on-one, and though Trae can have those games where he can hurt you, when he does that, he's not helping anybody else, so that's what we were trying to do as much as we can. I thought we did a pretty good job of it.

Q. You have the turnover late on the out-of-bounds play. Can you take me through that one and then the next play being able to clean it up?

DOC RIVERS: Well, we really didn't clean it up, we just got the ball in bounds. I reminded our guys, you know, you can go in the backcourt (laughing).

We will be better. That was a brain fart. None of those

were good, honestly. We have not had problems at all getting the ball inbounds. It might have been the first time in a while. Khris is our guy, but sometimes you forget that he hasn't played and so I thought you could see that a little bit.

Q. You said a bunch of times including the last two days here that if there's a tournament, competitors want to win it. You've made that very clear. You could see from the bench, it was like Game 7 energy. Why does it matter so much to these guys? What is it about these guys that 1 of 82 technically means so much?

DOC RIVERS: It's funny, a lot of people say it's the money, and it's not; it's the competition.

Now, the guys who aren't playing, it's the money. You know, I've never been hugged more by our rookies in my life than after that game. They were celebrating like it was a big game.

But I just think it's a competition, man, and you want your team to be competitive. You want them to -- I'm not going to get on a soapbox, but I just think I'm not going to go generation. I'm trying not to. Accept the challenge, that's all I've been talking about. I think we run from challenges a lot, and we talked about it; let's accept it. Let's put our name out there. We're going to try to win it, and if we don't win it, we don't win it. But there's nothing wrong with saying you want to win something, and if you win it, great, and if you don't, at least you went for it.

That's what I'm proud of our guys. I think Giannis did it when we said it. He was the first guy, he just threw it out there, we want to win, and I think it's good for our team.

Q. That last stretch there Giannis has the turnaround jumper, the block there, kind of the way he --

DOC RIVERS: Oh, the loose ball where he dove on the floor, yeah.

Q. He closed the game. What stood out to you?

DOC RIVERS: Winning plays. We never show film after a



game, and we showed the winning plays today.

Like, you got to -- it takes what it takes. I wish you could script what it takes. You don't know it until the game starts, until the end. Certain guys, Dre makes a three, you know, a big three. Giannis and Brook get a double block, Giannis gets a loose ball. You can't script any of that stuff before the game, but you just got to keep teaching that it just takes what it takes every night. Tonight was a great example of that.

Q. Khris Middleton you kind of talked about it a little bit, kind of where is he mentally?

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, it's game to game. It's a good question. It's so funny, he looked to me with like five seconds like I need a do-over, you know, and I said, well, you get it Tuesday. That's the great thing about the NBA. You could see the rust. Like the layups, the transition where we threw it ahead; before he knew it, that's at least a foul or a basket.

I got to tell you, halfway into that drive I was sitting there thinking, this is not looking good right now, you know. But you got to keep trusting him, putting him out there because the more minutes he plays, all that will come back. He's so important to our team and he still in a lot of ways organizes our team better than anyone on our floor can do it. So, getting him back is huge for us.

Q. What do you think about Las Vegas as a host NBA city and what's your take on the city possibly getting a NBA team?

DOC RIVERS: That's a very -- are you from Vegas? Yeah, I thought so. (Laughing.) Yeah, I love it as a host city. I mean, this city is a convention, big event city. This is a big event, so it's perfect for this. Yeah, they're going to get it. I don't know this, but I'm assuming Vegas will be in the NBA someday. Baseball is here, football is here, and everything else is here, right? So we need to come, as well. I think it would be great. I think it will happen.

Q. How different is the routine, the pregame routine going to be for Tuesday's finals?

DOC RIVERS: I don't understand, pregame routine? What do you mean?

Q. Your preparation for the championship game.

DOC RIVERS: Okay, yeah, preparation. Yeah, we're going to take tomorrow off. The coaching staff never get off, we'll watch film. I think it's a 5:30 game; I don't even know that. So it will be a short day and we're going to have

to get a lot of stuff in.

There's a chance, you know, if we play Houston, at least we've played them, so that would shorten our work. If we play Oklahoma, we have not seen them this year. That would make us have to work a lot more. So we'll just wait and see and then we'll be ready.

Q. Considering how your season started, how much importance or stock do you put in making a run at the Cup, specifically playing for a championship?

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, you know, I don't. Like, I just wanted to win the Cup. Listen, outside Milwaukee, I think a lot of people was, "What's going on?" I don't think one person inside thought that at all. We just believed that it was going to click, it was going to happen -- I would make a point of saying we assumed that -- now it is, but we still got a long way to go. I look at our team and I think we have a vast growth that we're going to have to become a better team defensively and offensively. That's what's so exciting about this group, because we have a bunch of veterans who are still changing for some of the new things that we're doing, and it's been great to see.

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