

# Emirates NBA Cup

Saturday, December 14, 2024

## Houston Rockets

## Alperen Sengun

## Fred VanVleet

### Semifinal Postgame



Oklahoma City Thunder 111, Houston Rockets 96

**Q. What made it so difficult to break through their defense? Was it just missing open shots or was it more than that that you would Luka to could differently?**

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, I think for the most part, I mean, they are a good defensive team obviously. We started off a little off rhythm, out of rhythm, a couple turnovers. They did, too. It was kind of ugly to start.

But we just never found the rhythm and never found a flow.

If you're not going to make shots against a team like that, it just gradually gets tougher to score. That lack of scoring puts pressure on your defense, and it just kind of compounds things.

I thought our execution was okay. It wasn't bad by any stretch. But what determines that? Is it making shots or are you executing? Kind of depends on how you look at it. Make some shots, offense looks better. Obviously we didn't.

**Q. You guys talked about how the experience of these games has been official. Can you take something from this? Can you grow from this in some way?**

ALPEREN SENGUN: Yeah, of course. There's a lot of things we've got to learn. It was a tough game. We knew it was going to be a tough game. So we have now off days. We can just watch it, learn it and just focus on the season.

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, I think so. I think there's always room to grow and get better. You would like to learn by winning all the time and everything to be great, but that's not reality.

I think it's a valuable experience being here with the stage and the way the NBA has kind of set up this game and this weekend. It has that playoff-style atmosphere, intensity.

Obviously it's a neutral site here. For a young group, I think it's valuable experience. But obviously we're very disappointed in our performance today.

**Q. Fred, in that fourth quarter, I think you guys were down 84-79, and then for the next minute, they go on an 8-0 run. Is it simply about shot-making? I know the NBA is a make-or-miss league, but are there other things you guys can do if the shot aren't falling?**

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, for sure. I have watch that stretch again. But I think we got to five. I think we fouled a three-point shooter, maybe once or twice in a short period of time and they made a shot.

So, yeah, it's tough. Buckets were hard to come by tonight, and they go on a little 8-0 run to give themselves a cushion, it makes it tough. So again, I mean, Shai got to the line 15 times. That hurts. Lu, five threes. That hurts. Guys made plays and we didn't. Other than Dillon, nobody else really made shots tonight. I make a couple more shots, we probably feel a little bit better. So I'll take the blame for that one.

**Q. When Coach was here, he was talking about momentum. And he told us a couple times where the momentum could have changed with one shot. Do you feel that?**

FRED VANVLEET: Yeah, I think you definitely could feel it. The whole building felt it just watching the game. We definitely feel it. We're out there. We got some great looks. Stuff didn't fall. A couple things go this way, that way, a couple calls here and there, a couple shots. It's a game of inches out there. The margin is so thin. It ended up being 15, but it certainly was closer than that for most of the game and could have went either way.

Like I said, we never really got on top and seized the moment and took over the rhythm. It's hard to do that when you shoot 36 percent from the field and 23 from three. It was a tough one out there.

**Q. There has not been a whole lot of games with this kind of spotlight on you guys. Is it a disappointment to not show yourselves at your best, or is it just about the**

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## **game, just trying to win a game?**

ALPEREN SENGUN: I mean, there's not like -- you know, it was a bad day for a couple of our best players, and that was one of me. I just didn't start the game my best.

But you know, just like we said, we've got to learn from here. Just got to get better and start getting ready again.

FRED VANVLEET: I'll add to that. I think that we should be disappointed in our performance, but it's more of a missed opportunity than a disappointment. This is something outside of the norm. It has no impact on the season. It would have been great to win this thing, but our goals are for the end of the season. We can be disappointed in our performance, but at the end of the day, we missed an opportunity. We didn't lose our season tonight. So we've got to get back to work.

**Q. Fred, I know you and Coach talk often about everything you see on the floor and the offense in general. In terms of the kind of team you want to be from a stylistic standpoint, currently you guys are maybe 20th in threes attempted in a game. Is this a team that wants to be in the top 10 of attempts and in terms of playing fast and that kind of stuff?**

FRED VANVLEET: What I will say publicly is we have to figure it out. We have to be better offensively. Other than that, I'm not really going to talk about what we want to do here. Coach can probably give you a better answer than that.

It's my job as a point guard to figure out how to get this team to perform better. It starts with myself -- 3-for-15 and 1-for-11 is not good enough.

Other than that, everything else will probably try to be ironed out behind the scenes and just find something that feels better and get more flow more consistently. We'll continue to iron it out.

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