

Emirates NBA Cup

Monday, December 16, 2024

Milwaukee Bucks

Doc Rivers

Championship Practice Day



DOC RIVERS: Before we start, I'm sure everyone knows about the shooting in Madison, Wisconsin, five have passed away already, not a lot to say. Just a shame this keeps happening. Kids can't go to school safe, and it just seems like we don't do anything about it. Not going to get up here on the podium and give a long speech except for it's just bad, you know, and that we are thinking about them.

Q. You obviously were here last year in a different role and now here as a coach. Curious what you think of the tweaks the league has made in terms of changing the schedule and is there anything you'd like to see tweaked in the future?

DOC RIVERS: Good question. You know, it's interesting. I like that the space -- I guess if I could tweak one thing, it would be after this to try to give the teams that are playing in the finals a cushion.

You know, I remember last year, I think I told Darwin this, during the game, I actually said, "Oh no, how are the Lakers going to play right after this?" Because emotionally you get high and you get thrown right back into it. I think we have a day off, and then we have a back-to-back.

So we are going to try to cushion it the best way we can. But that would be the only tweak, I guess I would make. But I love it. I love the format. I like that people want to win this thing, and it's good.

Q. Any health updates for the team?

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, Damian didn't go, precautionary, and Khris is sick. So other than that, everybody was good.

Q. Just for you guys, you have a game against the Thunder Friday, you have a game against the Cavs. I don't know if you guys feel like you have a signature win, maybe you don't think signature wins mean anything.

DOC RIVERS: No.

Q. Do you feel like you need to get one of those teams?

DOC RIVERS: No. We just want to win all of them, if you want me to be honest but I don't think we need one. We believe who we are and we believe we're going to be here and we're here, and we don't have a signature win yet, I guess. I don't know what that is.

You know, the way we started, that was impossible to have a signature win. We weren't playing very well. You know, so no, would be the answer.

Having said that, we want to win just like Oklahoma wants to win tomorrow. So let's get one.

Q. The three-point numbers in the league keep growing and growing, and the Celtics are probably one of eight or nine teams attempting in the 40s now. You were a player and coach for many years. Do you think the game is getting better out there on the floor?

DOC RIVERS: That's a great question that I don't know the answer. I think there's times where you watch the game and it looks beautiful, and then there's times where you watch the game and it looks awful. You know, I think it goes game-to-game. You know, I can watch Golden State play all night. They take a lot of threes. They move the ball.

But I can watch Boston play, too, and it's not because they take a lot of threes. They play right. They move the ball. The ball moves to the right guy. They defend. They play together.

And there's other teams that only just jack shots up, don't play defense, and I don't want to watch them.

So I think it's hitter's choice, I guess. I thought last year, the game got more physical in the second half of the year, and I think fans actually enjoyed that.

I think what we want is motion, movement, a physicality to the game, as well, and we like watching team play. I don't think that will ever go away. And so the teams that do that, you enjoy watching, and the teams that don't, you don't.

Q. You guys are competitive and you want to win this. There's money on the table, and yet win or lose tomorrow, it doesn't matter at all to what you're doing over 82 games.

DOC RIVERS: Yeah.

Q. And playoff implications. Would you like to see some way that winning the Cup also benefits you in the regular season?

DOC RIVERS: It's impossible, and the reason it is, is it's unfair that we would have to play a West Coast team three times. It's unfair that whoever's in it, I guess is the best way to answer your question, you have to play them an extra time. That one game could be the difference in you getting the first seed and the second seed.

I don't think as far as the game comes, it doesn't affect how we're going to play. You know, there's going to be a winner and there's going to be a loser. Both teams who are in the Championship want to win.

So I don't think it hurts the competition part. I don't like that the numbers aren't counted. I don't know how you can do that. I'm not smart enough to figure that out.

I think AD had a monster game last year. You know, big points, big assists, and rebounds and that should be counted in something. You know that, just shouldn't go away.

So that part, as far as record, I don't think you can.

Q. What would you think of just knocking one loss off your record and having a win for the team that wins the Cup?

DOC RIVERS: I'm all for that, yeah. Yeah, let's do that (laughing). You know, that wouldn't be bad. I could say something on that but I'm going to stay away because I've been fined once.

Q. Along these lines, everybody seems to like Vegas, or says that they do. Asked a different way: Do you think the tournament belongs here? Like how would you react if they moved it?

DOC RIVERS: As long as it's a warm place, I'm good. Just no cold places, please. And it's actually cool here.

I don't know. I don't even subscribe to the whole -- that Vegas has to be the place, anyway. It's just a convention city. It's a neutral site, which is very difficult to find. If they

want to move it around to other neutral, warm city sites, I think everybody would be fine with that.

It feels like this is the perfect place, in my opinion, but I don't think it really matters, and we're all going to have -- the issue with like attendance in this is, you know, five days ago, no one from Milwaukee knew we were going to be here. No one from Oklahoma knew they were going to be here.

It's tough. You're not going to have like a two-week period where your teams know when people can plan and come. You know, and so obviously last year, the Lakers were in it. That's a three-hour drive, four; but three if you're driving fast and you can come and watch the game. That would be the only issue that would be nice to figure out but I don't know how you figure that out.

Q. You've mentioned you want to see your team win. Do you have any idea what this win would mean for you and your team?

DOC RIVERS: No. No. It just means that we decided -- I guess for us, we were struggling early, and the Cup started and we said, "Let's win it."

That told me that our team believed what I believed; that we're going to be good. We're going to be a really good team at some point. It just took longer than we thought, and now we're here.

So I guess it means that.

Q. The Cup exists somewhere between a normal regular season game and the playoffs.

DOC RIVERS: Yeah.

Q. Curious how much more attention to detail can you put in a game plan for a game like tomorrow night?

DOC RIVERS: It's better because it's not regular season where you play every other day or two days. You can actually -- you know, you can actually watch enough film and make some adjustments. If we wanted to, we could have had two days of practice for this.

I would say the biggest difference is like neither team practiced yesterday. Both teams got shots up. Neither team did much today. If this was a playoff game, today would have been a much livelier practice, I would say that.

I think the way, at least we look at it is, because we have a bunch of games following this, that you're looking at your legs past this game, as well. And so I think that would be

the only thing as far as preparation.

But you know, it would be great if you had two and three days every game to prepare for teams. It would be a different game.

Q. With you having plenty of big-game experience, what is your real message to these young guys who haven't had that experience?

DOC RIVERS: Well, it depends on your team and it depends on the guy. A lot of times, send personal messages to the guys. The bigger the game, the more the team has to be a team. And what usually happens when things go awry, is either the role players just decide, I'm just going to lean on your stars, and that never goes well. Or your stars decide, I'm going to win the game for us, and that never goes well.

When you continue to play the right way, things usually go well for you.

Q. I just want to ask you the difference, looking at those first 10 games versus the last 15, what kind of things are your team doing on the floor that you guys weren't executing and doing like those first 10 games?

DOC RIVERS: The simple answer, offensively our best shooters, the ball wasn't going in. Brook, I think was in the 20s. Bobby was in the 20s. TP was in the 20s. AJ Green was in the 20s. These are great shooters, and that's something we didn't even address. Like we knew, like you don't forget how to shoot. We just knew that would catch up.

I think the biggest change is our defense, over the last 12 or whatever games, we're in the Top-10. During that stretch, we are 27, 26. You know, you're not going to win a lot of games there.

The biggest change is we've caught up to what we've been trying to teach defensively. Our shooters are making shots, and we have a guy named Giannis, and the more misses you get with this team, the more lethal he is because that gets him out in fast breaks. That gets him in the middle of the floor. When you're taking the ball out every time, that takes away some of what Giannis can do.

But we can get teams and have multiple misses every game, but Giannis gets out and we get to spread the floor, we are pretty lethal when that happens.

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