

Emirates NBA Cup

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

Milwaukee Bucks

Doc Rivers

Championship Postgame



Milwaukee Bucks 97, Oklahoma City Thunder 81

Q. Giving up 31 or 30 points given up in the second half, in a game that doesn't count, what did that show you?

DOC RIVERS: Just is says a lot about our guys. Giannis at halftime, that's all we talked about is our defense. We felt like in the first half we didn't execute offensively well and we felt like we executed offensively -- we thought we had to win the three-ball game coming into the game. That was a big emphasis for us. We have to win from the three-point line.

And we have to take them out of their iso game and I thought we did that, at least we tried to make Shai and Williams play in a crowd. I thought overall we did that.

Q. On a scale of 1 to 10, where does having the opportunity to coach for Giannis rank for you?

DOC RIVERS: I mean, a 10, right. That opportunity, you know, to coach a Giannis, to coach a Dame, to see that group, a veteran group, it's an amazing opportunity for a coach. This group allows you to coach them, they really do. They let you coach them hard. Nobody takes anything personal. I even said it last year, it was like coaching grownups, if you know what I mean. They really get that. They get that you have to tell them the truth and they handle it, and that's been great.

Q. You mentioned the effort defensively but what do you think led to the way you guys smothered them especially in the second half?

DOC RIVERS: We're competitive. Didn't for me but one of the guys, I think yesterday said, all they heard about was the defense of the other team. That's all they have heard for two days. I think that bothered guys.

And so I thought that was part of it. You could see them, I think when they scored the last bucket, our whole bench exploded. They were mad. They were very intent on trying to hold them to a low number. That was good.

Q. In the whole run up, you were asked what could this mean and the answer was, I don't know. Maybe it's to be determined, but Champions is next to your team's name now.

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, that's not a bad thing.

Q. In this immediate moment, to have that word attached to this group in general, what does that mean and even if you can't predict, what it could, what does it mean in this moment?

DOC RIVERS: I think it reminds us that we can beat anybody. And we don't care if it tells everybody else that. Like we only care about us. It's what I said in the first day of camp. Also said we can lose anybody if we don't play right, right.

I thought we learned that lesson early. So I think it just helps the messaging that when we play right, when we play together, listen, that's an excellent defensive team and they forced Dame and Giannis to pass the ball and they did that. And then they passed it so much they stopped helping it and then those two got to work. That's what this is a teacher for us is different ways to win.

Q. You've talked all year about trying to get Giannis more comfortable on elbows in the post. Can you speak to the control he exerted over that game?

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, it's great. One advantage we had, and again, we came in here and we heard about the old team and all the young guys. And we just kept talking about our size, and as the slower the game gets, the bigger we get. And that's what we kept talking about. You know, taking them out of transition, make it a halfcourt game, and it allows us to be a big basketball team.

I thought starting the second half with playing Giannis on the elbow over and over again, so he can see where the traps were coming from, was good for us. You know, earlier in the year, probably couldn't have done that with him, and now you can. And it just makes us a better team.

Q. What lessons do you hope the guys can take from

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not only today but the whole tournament?

DOC RIVERS: Playing together. Going in at night, not drinking (laughing). You know, but really, I had to say that because it's true and just playing together, hanging in there. You know, a great lesson for our team is a guy named Pat Connaughton. Pat Connaughton had not played in a month, and today we chose him to play in this game and he played great. The best part of it, he never stopped working. He kept preparing every day so there's message in there, too.

Q. You spoke at length in pregame about Darwin. But Darwin and Taurean are now 14-0. And that's why you brought them to Milwaukee.

DOC RIVERS: Yeah, we said that right away. We brought our secret weapon. Darwin Ham is now an undefeated coach in two years in this Cup and then when I said it, TP, he was like, what about me? And TP is an undefeated player and that's pretty cool for them because, on the back end of this, it's tough, you come out of this and you're back to the grind. This is going to be a tough little stretch. We have to figure out how to get through this.

Q. Your thoughts on the NBA Cup itself, it was a packed house tonight for two teams that maybe the Vegas residents are not that familiar with, they're Laker fans or whatever, but your thoughts on the NBA Cup, and is Vegas the perfect city for something like that or is it going to be scattered around the rest of the NBA?

DOC RIVERS: No. Right here. Right here. That's it. Listen, I was proven wrong in a very good way. I was worried that if an L.A. team wasn't in the cup we couldn't get enough people in the crowd, and the people from Las Vegas showed up. It was packed today and that's huge. You know, not only for Vegas but it's huge for the league and so it all worked out and it was great. Guys had a great time here. Restaurants, that's it. I'll stop there.

Q. Going off of the fun around Las Vegas, your favorite thing to do here outside of coaching and be a part of the basketball scene?

DOC RIVERS: It's eat. I mean, look at me, you know, it's usually restaurants. I have a couple of them, a lot of favorites, I'm not going to name one. It's a great town, it really is. You can also shop a lot and spend a lot of money here. It's a good city.

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