

NBA Western Conference First Round: Rockets vs Warriors

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San Francisco, California, USA

Houston Rockets

Ime Udoka

Game 6 - Postgame Media Conference

Houston Rockets 115, Golden State Warriors 107

Q. Talk about how the veterans have stepped up.

IME UDOKA: It's always valuable with you full team contribution. Off-night for a few guys and others came and stepped up.

But yeah, obviously Steven was big, as far as Alpie got some fouls and then knocking down the free throws and doing what he does defensively it. It all helps but good to have some vets as well.

Q. Do you believe in the whole playoff riser mode thing and that's something Fred has been able to achieve?

IME UDOKA: I think people, especially veterans know the urgency of the playoffs and it gets monotonous at times through the regular season. Sometimes pace themselves, safe themselves for the right moment, and obviously Fred came out not shooting his best. And he's had some really good stretches lately. He knows what it is. He's been a champion. Been there, done that. So wouldn't expect anything less than that from him.

Q. In six games you've seen just about every version of this Warriors team. To have that kind of spirit coming down from 3-1 to tie it at 3-3, that's been a theme for the team all year, but how was it from your advantage point in this environment?

IME UDOKA: It was good. It was fine. I think we knew they were going to come out aggressive and for us do more of the same. Defense travels, and our awareness and physicality has improved in the series.

And in general our young guys are not really fazed by things. They just continue to play through it. Like you guys

mentioned, they have really good veterans that steady them at times.

For us, it was just continue to do what we did to get here. Even in the games we lost, we didn't play our best. We played average at best. There were some one-possession games and when we've played good basketball, we've had some blowouts.

That bodes well knowing that we can ramp it up there, and if you just have an average or above-average game you'll be in good shape.

Q. Coming into this game, the previous two games, Fred has shot like 67 percent from three or close to it. Do you expect them to continue sort of devoting so much to shutting down Jalen Green and let Fred do thinks thing?

IME UDOKA: We talked about that. We like them on the court together for that reason. They put one of the better defenders there.

Guys are really setting screens and our pace have been better and get a lot more freedom. Wearing them down a little bit. They do what they do. They have switched lineups quite a bit so far. At times feels like they are going for defensive lineups and then offensive, you can only have a little bit of both.

Fred's been aggressive picking on that and if they do adjust with Jalen, he'll have some freedom, as well.

Q. You guys came out swinging in the fourth quarter. What did you like about that sense of urgency that you saw from your whole team?

IME UDOKA: We were a little disappointed they won the third by three. We let them score 36. That's way too high for us and felt like we had opportunities to kind of push the lead up like we did in the fourth. We got to seven or eight a few times, and lost guys on cuts in their zone or they got offensive rebound. They had nine second-chance points in that quarter.



We felt we were there, clogging it open and came out and did that. After giving up a 36-point quarter, other than the last ten that some of their third unit got, we held them to 13 in that quarter. Really good bounceback defensive quarter. 1 for 16 at the four-minute mark. Did our job there.

And then obviously kudos to our defense and Steven for standing up and knocking down the free throws. That's where we extend the lead.

Q. Like they did early in the series, they fouled Steven to try to get you to take him out and you didn't budge. Can you talk about that chess move and the decision to stick with Steven?

IME UDOKA: Yeah, it's time-and-score situation. We feel obviously if you're holding somebody at 1 for 16, you know, four points or whatever in the first eight minutes, feel good about our defense. So that's going to sustain regardless if he made them or missed them. Helps get him in a rhythm.

The other night, at the 3-some minute mark we could go another minute or so before we could get him back in and it was a tight game and that was a decision that night. For the most part, confident in him. Like I said, if you're defending at that level you're not going to take that out and go away from that.

Q. For a long time we haven't seen teams go zone when Steph Curry is on the floor. Only really box-and-one has been tried. You came up with the zone now, two, three, box-in-one principles. How did you come up with that?

IME UDOKA: It was out of necessity when we started playing our bigger lineups and playing teams with small ball. We wanted to protect some matchups there.

But the communication is probably even better in our zone than in man-to-man. Obviously we're dominant with our size. We put Jabari in the three in the bigger lineup there. Don't have a lot of cross-matches or mismatches and have gone to it and saw that it worked.

And like I said, I think Alpie and some of those guys kind of feel some comfort with having Steven in bigger lineups as well. Out of necessity, honestly not a lot of teams are playing double-big lineups. We like what it does. Our activity up top is great, and the principles, with obviously Curry and recognizing where he is in the zone, it takes a lot of communication and if you stay with him, we fill the spots behind it.

Q. There was period in the fourth quarter where you talked about where the Warriors missed 15 of 16 shots.

What was the key defensively staying with that scheme?

IME UDOKA: Locating Curry was a big part. Giving up the shots that we wanted to to guys, and we knew if we rebounded better than we did in the third quarter and we limit them to one shot they get out and run. They did fouling and got into the bonus early and slowed the pace down where we could set our self-defenses well. Like I said Steven knocked those down.

But I think our awareness on Curry, our communication, sometimes you have two on them and everybody else has to scramble. But if they are playing to play certain defensive lineups, they are going to have weak links offensively, and we'll live with the shots. And that paid off tonight.

Q. Game 3 and 4 in this building were emotional after the whistle stopped. Seems like that stuff has gone away and you've just played basketball. Is that something you talked about as a group to cut out the extracurricular stuff and just play?

IME UDOKA: It was a mantra going into the series. Play through everything. You know, it's going to be a physical game. Don't ask for anything. We want to be physical. So if the refs allow it or that's how the style of game is played, that favors us more often than not.

And so yeah, I think guys are passed that point and there was some chippiness a few times here and there but seems like it's a norm every now and then in this game, in the series.

So I think guys are passed that. They understand what's on the line, and what to play through, and if they don't, I kind of remind them.

Q. Why do you think the communication is better in zone?

IME UDOKA: Because you don't have a man or matchup, you have to more so cover an area, and obviously you want to recognize where certain players are, as well.

So yeah, it forces you to talk. You should do man-to-man with some of the switches as well, but there's less hesitation and it does take them out of some of their sets, as well. Forces to you talk.

And I would say more than anything, you're not chasing one guy around the whole time. Alpie is in the spot. He's handing guys off, and Fred and Amen and Jalen are really good up top.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

So recognizing when to stay with Curry and guys are handing him off to our bigs; you just have to be on point with communication, especially in zone.

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