

Los Angeles Clippers Media Conference

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Ivica Zubac

Press Conference

Q. How hard is it when there's not sort of that energy in the arena during a game?

IVICA ZUBAC: I mean, it's always a challenge, especially when there's no fans in the arenas, but we can't not bring energy. We've got to bring it every night and we've got to create it on our own. It's a challenge, but we've always got to have energy, and we can never use that as an excuse.

Q. Is it a double-edged sword because you guys know that you're good enough to do it for a five-minute stretch where you have to be on --

IVICA ZUBAC: It does have to be the whole game. Yesterday we turned it on in the fourth quarter, and we won the game, but it was still a close game, and we can't play like that. We've got to be locked in with energy all 48 minutes. Every team is really good, and we cannot start off easy like we've been this series and then try to get back into the game later.

Q. With that being said, when you guys did turn on your defense at the end of the fourth quarter there, what did you think of Paul and Kawhi's defense? Was this kind of what you envisioned in training camp of how good defensively these guys could be, especially Kawhi and Paul together?

IVICA ZUBAC: Yeah, for sure. I mean, we all know they're one of the best two-way players in the league, and that's what we expect from them every night. That's what they expect from themselves every night they take on the challenge of guarding the best players, and they're capable of shutting them down, and it's a big advantage for us when it comes down the stretch, to have your best player guard the other best player and get a stop. It energizes the whole team and gives us confidence on defense and later on when we get a stop on offense, too.

Q. Obviously you mentioned sort of your teammates having your back and playing physical against Jokic. Obviously he's quite a sly player. Do you learn

something from every game you play against him, and what do you learn from a game like yesterday?

IVICA ZUBAC: You know, there's a lot. I think every night -- especially he's an All-Star center. Every night there's something I can learn from that match-up. It's just being physical. I can't worry about the refs and the fouls and all that. I've got to play physical, and that's going to give us the best chance to win. Like Pat said, I got six fouls this playoffs, I need to use them all and just be physical, and that's how I can help my teammates. From now on I'm trying to play as physical as I can, and next game I've got to be a little smarter with those fouls, and then we'll be good.

Q. You talked before about why you wear "enough" on your jersey. What have you learned over the past few months or since you've been in America about the experience of American black people?

IVICA ZUBAC: I mean, a lot. Ever since I got to the States, when I was outside, like I said, when I was looking in from outside, without ever being in the U.S., watching all the stuff in the media, TVs, movies, everything, seems like a perfect place. It took me to get here and get to know my teammates better to realize what they went through growing up and how hard it was for them.

You know, it's definitely -- from the people outside, you can't really know what's going on until you get here, and that's what I realized, and it's a great thing that's happening over here in Orlando. Players are speaking up, and hopefully it's going to lead to major changes.

Q. You guys have mixed up your pick-and-roll coverages versus the Jokic-Murray pick-and-roll. What are the trade-offs or challenges that you see from dropping versus switching or trying to trap? What issues do they present when you kind of throw different looks at them?

IVICA ZUBAC: Trapping is a good thing for us, but then you end up with Jokic with the ball in his hands going 4 and 3 when we all know how good his passing skills are and his ability to create for the others, and that's definitely a big challenge when you trap on a pick-and-roll, and when I'm in drop, it's harder when he pops. It's harder to close that gap when he gets the ball.

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You know, they're a good team, and every coverage is not going to be perfect, but we've just got to keep mixing it up and keep playing hard, and I think that's what we've got to do, keep mixing it up, play hard, and we're going to be good.

Q. I want to go back to what you were saying about using your fouls. You looked pretty emotionally frustrated when you fouled out.

IVICA ZUBAC: Yeah.

Q. You had the opportunity if you didn't foul out to finish the game. What does that say about your own personal development and how much pride do you take into the fact that you're in position now with this team to finish games against an All-Star center like that?

IVICA ZUBAC: It's amazing. You know, that's all I ever wanted when I got to the league. I started off in G-League, and I set a goal for myself to get a couple minutes in a game and then after that I wanted to get into a rotation, then I wanted to be a starter, and my next goal was to be able to finish the games. Knowing that I put myself in that opportunity to finish games and that Coach trusts me to do that is great, and I'm going to be setting my goals higher and higher every time. I've just got to keep working, and I think it all depends -- I've got to bring the energy from the start, and to be able to finish the games, I've got to be able to bring it from the first minute. That's a big challenge for me, and I'm still working on that, getting prepared for the games better and being more focused on the things I've got to do.

I think when I get that on a high level, I think being able to finish games is going to be something that happens a lot of nights.

Q. When you threw the towel, what were you most mad at?

IVICA ZUBAC: At myself, for getting that foul. I know the team needs me, and I've got to be smarter with those fouls. I will be. I know from these games I've learned what I can do and what I cannot do on defense, and I think it was good for me that that happened last night. Now I know what I've got to do for the rest of the series.

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