

# Los Angeles Clippers Media Conference

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## Rick Carlisle

### Postgame Press Conference



RICK CARLISLE: Obviously, it's an important game for us. It's a great effort, great win. Start to the game was important, gave us momentum. Great team to make runs. When they came back and took the lead in the second half, we really exhibited great poise, and we stayed aggressive. That's what you got to do in a playoff series.

I thought Porzingis was very patient in this game. He's got a top five defensive player in the world guarding him in Kawhi Leonard. They have that much respect for his abilities at the offensive end, and he did a good job of staying patient and finding ways to create advantages as the game went on.

There were a couple stretches, I think, that he got frustrated and took a couple shots that may not have been the best shots, but in the end, I love his discipline, his patience, and the big free throws were huge at the end of the game, and then the dunk kind of put a cap on it.

Doncic was very good. Finney-Smith was great, Kleber. Those guys all dug in really hard defensively against the best players in the world. We've just got to maintain the edge. We'll look at the film and see which things we can do better. There are many. They'll do the same. And then we've got to get ready for Tuesday.

**Q. Rick, you mentioned you guys keeping your poise in the second half. Some of those guys keeping their poise -- Finney-Smith, in particular, is really an unsung player. Just wanted to ask you about his growth coming up big in a situation like this under pressure.**

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, and this is where year two in the playoffs, this is where you take advantage of the experience that you had in year one. Dorian's worked extremely hard over a five year period -- four or five-year period. He's one of the most improved players in the NBA. It's happened at a gradual rate, so he never, ever gets mentioned for most improved player in a given season, but he is a fearless competitor. He has great belief in himself. His three-pointer tonight was absolutely key to the win. We

ran an after-timeout play after the first half to get that three. He got open and knocked it in.

That was at a point where we had been up eight or ten, and they made a run to get it back to six, and we put it back to nine or something like that. He's taken on hellacious matchups every night. Tonight it was Leonard. He's got the hardest guy on the team. Some nights it's a point guard. Some nights it's a four man. His versatility is key, but he was great tonight. \*\*.

**Q. Can you talk about the way that Luka was able to make switches and basically force the Clippers to abandon that way defensively, and then the way the other guys responded when they were sending two at him.**

RICK CARLISLE: Luka's seen virtually every coverage known to mankind, every kind of double-team, every kind of switching scenario, switching and double-teaming 30 feet away from the basket, et cetera, et cetera. It's just a matter of getting to the right spots when he gets double-teamed.

He's obviously very good against switches. He mixed up the step-back and the drives, and I thought there were a couple times he could have gotten to the free-throw line down the stretch, but we were unlucky and he didn't get the whistle.

He's got to keep giving them a different dose of looks with a mixture of drives and shots and drives to passes to spaces, but he's a very unique player for a 22-year-old. The level of poise that he has, his ability to slow the game to see what's going on even when the clock is at six or seven seconds, he's able to slow it down and hold that ball just long enough to give a teammate a great look.

He was great tonight, and I thought his defense was very good too.

**Q. You were obviously just talking about Dorian and his development. Can you take us back to, like even when he came in as a rookie, and what did you make of him as a player? What challenges did you give to him of where he needed to improve, and how has he done that so successfully over the course of his career**



here?

RICK CARLISLE: As a rookie, he was always a soft-spoken, low key personality but an intense competitor. He had played stretch four in college and shot a decent three-point number, but it wasn't the kind of three-point number in college that would get your attention and ever make you believe that it was likely that he could become a three man in the NBA.

Usually it goes the other way. Usually guys are three men in college, and they become NBA fours or twos, and they become threes. He knew that his shot needed to be overhauled. The first year he got a lot of valuable experience, and then he really started to work on his shooting.

Peter Patton, our shooting coach, has done a tremendous job not only on his mechanics, but also giving him an extreme amount of confidence. Look, this is what player development is all about. It doesn't happen overnight. You look at Dorian Finney-Smith, Maxi Kleber, these guys, they came in, they establish that they could play in the NBA because they could do things at the defensive end, and then their offense had to evolve. They had to go from being a midrange shooter to what he is now, which is a knockdown three-point shooter, and Dorian has done the same thing.

The thing about Dorian, I think, that flies under the radar, when you have stars like Doncic and Porzingis, is the leadership role that he has on our team. He's a guy who, when he speaks up, the locker room is quiet and people listen. He's a man of few words, but when he speaks, our guys pay close attention.

**Q. How have you seen things evolve on Luka on how he handles frustration if he gets in trouble or if he doesn't get a call that goes his way?**

RICK CARLISLE: Well, getting 15 technicals with six games to go will put you in a situation where you've got to take a close look at it. Down the stretch of the season, he did a great job, and there were plenty of times he could have been frustrated and gotten one, but he didn't.

He remembers the series last year and some of the chippy things that happened. I thought last year in the series he did a great job of maintaining his poise.

Look, this is his time of year. He's one of the smartest basketball players you will ever meet at any age, at any level, and he knows that we've got to be a next man mentality team, and he's got to be one of the leaders of that charge. This series will continue to be extremely

challenging in that vein because of the physical nature of it and the fact that the Clippers have a bunch of great defenders and they're throwing all kinds of great looks at him as well.

**Q. Rick, the fact that you won this game with production coming from the likes of Hardaway and Dorian Finney-Smith and Maxi Kleber, all in the fourth quarter, what does that do for their individual confidence and your confidence as a team knowing you can win games like that without being carried by Luka and K.P. in the fourth?**

RICK CARLISLE: We've got a confident group overall. I thought Josh Richardson played a very important role in this game. He made big shots. He was great defensively. The shot he made, I think, at the end of the third quarter was a huge play and a huge momentum play. Look, here's a guy with three games in the season was asked to go from a starting role, which he's been for the last five years, to come in off the bench, and that's hard. That's hard, and it's difficult.

But he was willing to do it, and his response tonight was tremendously important. Brunson, this guy, he'd been playing in big games his whole life, and he couldn't wait to play in the playoff. He didn't play a perfect game today, nobody did, but he had a very consistent attitude about how he was going to approach it, and that's the way our whole team does it. You go from Hardaway to Trey Burke, who didn't even get in the game today, this guy is going to be ready to play.

Powell, who played short minutes, in that stretch where they were throwing a frustrating switching defense at us, he came and made some really positive things happen.

Look, we're a strength in numbers operation. Luka is a great, great player, and K.P. is a great player, but as a team we know that everybody has got to be ready and everybody's got to pull their weight when called upon. Today we were able to do that, which was great.

The challenge going forward is going to be to maintain the edge and keep the fight.

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