

Los Angeles Clippers Media Conference

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Rick Carlisle

Press Conference

Q. I know there must be a great deal of excitement about playing in front of the largest crowd you've played in front of since March of 2020. I'm sure there's probably an inclination the team will come out sky high. Is there any sort of, anything that you want to say to them to manage the emotions of all that? I suppose that is probably some consideration of yours tonight, is it not?

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, it's a factor. We want to make it as positive a factor as possible. So talked about, talked a little bit about managing our energy level. It's a long game. With TV timeouts and everything, it's the better part of two hours and 45 minutes. So, but you got to be careful. This kind of energy in a building is something that can be very valuable. So we got guys that have played in playoff games even though we have a young team. Haven't necessarily played with this kind of environment, but the meaning of the games has been there. So the hope is that this can be an enhancement.

Q. Is Maxi going to be available tonight, and if so, what has been the benefit of having two days in between each of these playoff games? Obviously, it seems like a benefit, but what specifically is he able to do to get himself ready that wasn't really possible in that compressed time?

RICK CARLISLE: I believe he's going to play. I just walked in. There's traffic outside, which I haven't seen all year, so I was a few minutes late walking into the building. But I think he's going to play. He's going to be listed as questionable throughout the series. This thing is just, it's just been a difficult challenge. He wasn't feeling great yesterday but we are hopeful that tonight, as you said, with the second day of rest and a long morning and afternoon leading up to the game, that he can cycle up and feel okay. But the extent to which the two days helped, I think it does help in a situation like his. Now, when you factor in a long flight home on Wednesday and the effects that traveling at 40,000 feet has on the body and stuff like that, it's probably a very good thing that we had the two days in that



situation.

Q. We've got an off-court topic about mental health and wellness. I was wondering, how would you compare what the mental toll has been like for this season compared to the bubble, and are there any specific approaches you've taken with trying to navigate through these unique challenges this season?

RICK CARLISLE: Well, we have a very strong mental health staff, starting with Don Kalkstein, who is our director of sports psychology, and we have additional resources available and we make sure that our guys know that they're available on a confidential basis, et cetera, et cetera. I believe most teams in the league have these kinds of resources. This season's been different than the Orlando restart and it's had a different set of factors. In some ways, it's been more difficult. In other ways, it's probably been a lot better than the bubble. You're able to be at home for stretches. With the two-day, with the two-game series that have happened throughout the season, probably get a little more extended time at home. Conversely, you probably get a little more extended time on the road. The road trips have been a little longer than normal. But it's 72 games instead of 82, so that's probably a positive. So bottom line, I believe that both situations have been very challenging to manage on so many levels, starting with family and those kinds of things. On the other side of it, it's been an amazing job by the League to find a way to get through the restart last summer and to get through this 72 games to the completion of the regular season and now into the playoffs.

Q. This team is 12-2. When Luka hits at least five 3-pointers in a game, aside from the actual shot making, what have you liked about the decision-making on the type of threes that he's taking this season?

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, he's been more selective. He's spent a lot more time on it. One of the things that throws his three-point percentage into, a little crazy is his willingness to take 60- and 70-foot shots at the end of quarters. He likes taking those shots and he really doesn't care about his percentage. So, hey, I never overreact to his percentage really one way or the other, but we spent a lot more time this year on his shooting, on his mid-range



shooting, on his three-point shooting, simulating game-type situations in practice and in workout sessions. The results have shown. So I'm hoping he hits another five, at least.

Q. I would like to ask you, the League has always been at the forefront in social justice issues and you personally have always made it a point to point out issues within America that can improve the country. But the League this year has announced the creation of the Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Social Justice Champion Award. If the league has not asked you for your nomination or your submittal for your team, who would that be and why would you choose that person?

RICK CARLISLE: Oh, gosh, what a question. On our team, I would probably say Dwight Powell would be the guy that would come to mind because of his activism. He's been very socially active. He's a guy who is pretty high up in the leadership of the Players Association. He's very aware of situations. He worked with myself, Jamahl Mosley, Stephen Silas, last year with Coaches For Racial Justice and was involved with meetings with the mayor, the city manager, and the police chief here in Dallas that helped us upgrade some policing protocols. And he's a guy that's always there, not only willing, but very enthusiastic about doing anything that he can possibly do with not just social justice, but fundraising, helping in the community, et cetera, et cetera.

But I would say our whole team has taken a strong interest, particularly since the experience in the bubble, but if I had to -- if you asked me for one guy, he would be the guy that would probably stand out.

Q. I just want to ask, the Mavs are 29-0 this season when leading after the first quarter. Is that a point of emphasis for you or is it just coincidence? Is it a point of emphasis to come out strong and lead and keep the lead for the whole game?

RICK CARLISLE: Yes. Yeah, it is. And I know that you haven't been on a lot of these sessions, but the topic of strong starts comes up frequently, and it's the number one thing, not just for the Mavericks, but for every team to have success in this league. A great start in the first quarter is the one thing that translates most often to bringing a lead into the fourth quarter. According to, I don't know, whatever metric you want to name, playing from in front headed into the later stages of the game is one of the most important parts of winning. So, yeah, I mean, strong starts is something that every team tries to get.

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