

Los Angeles Clippers Media Conference

Tuesday, June 8, 2021

Los Angeles, California, USA

Donovan Mitchell

Postgame Press Conference

Utah Jazz - 112, Los Angeles Clippers - 109

Q. Couple things. First, Quin mentioned that you weren't feeling great tonight, said maybe a little nauseous and lightheaded. And then on top of that, the cameras caught a couple things. They caught you and D Wade talking during the third quarter, and then Quin telling you about getting your mind right and that will overcome everything else. And so I was, the question would be, what was the context of all that tonight, of what you were talking about with Dwayne, what Quin was saying to you, and how you were feeling while you were scoring all those points?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: Well, I was kind of hoping he didn't say it, but, yeah, I was definitely feeling it a little bit, but sometimes you just got to dig deep into a different place. And I was getting my ass kicked individually the first half on both ends of the floor, wasn't making the right reads. Luke hit a bunch of shots on me. Reggie hit a bunch of shots on me. And there was situations where I was just being lazy and letting that fatigue kind of get to me. So I came in at halftime and I just said, Look, I'm just going to have to find a way. And that was the biggest thing for me. And you hear that with what coach said. I forgot I was mic'ed up, so I didn't know that y'all caught that, but that was, that's why I love coach, man, and obviously a Coach of the Year stuff came out and I always believe he's the coach of the year because at some point in time you got to dig deep. We have been in a similar situation, Game 6 against OKC, where things were kind of erratic in the first half, and in the third quarter, you know, you just got to go out there, and in the fourth quarter you got to go out there and find a place, and that was pretty much it.

And then as far as Dwyane goes, I continuously ask him what he sees. I know what I see, but sometimes you have a different perspective, especially sitting on the floor like that, like, being able to see what he sees in his mind. It's great to have you have your coaching staff, your players, and then you have a guy like Hall of Famer Dwyane Wade to be like, What do you see? How can I be even more



efficient? And tonight wasn't -- it was a good night, but there was definitely some stuff that I missed that I definitely could be better at. And I think for me that's really where my head is at. At the end of the day, yeah, 45 is great, but I could have easily had eight or nine, even ten assists, could have had some rebounds that I could have definitely changed the game too. So for me that's where a lot of it was at, but that's, I hope that answers as your question.

Q. We were asking Bojan about your second-half performance, and he said that he felt like you went into halftime, saw you guys were down 13, and just figured it was time for you to take the game over. Does it feel that easy sometimes when you're going through a scoring stretch like that coming out scoring the first 10 of the third quarter?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: I think the biggest thing is the first half kind of just figuring out what they're going to do. You can watch so much film on how they played Dallas all you want, but at the end of the day, they're going to guard us differently. So kind of going out there and feeling the game. I was not -- I didn't do a lot of things right for my team in the first half and it really kind of ate at me, still does, putting my team in a certain position. I feel like that was on me to come out there and just set the tone on both ends of the floor. I think that's really where my head was at, just going out there and just trying to find a way to be aggressive. Tonight it was going to the rim and I hit a few threes, but who knows what it's going to be next game. They're going to make adjustments, and so are we.

At the end of the day, we could definitely all shoot a little better. We shot 40 percent from the field? We can definitely shoot better and make some more shots to not be down 13 at half and also get some stops. But for me just kind of come out interest and setting the tone, especially without Mike, you know, we can kind of get off the ball understanding that they got two guys who can really guard, so try to make sure we continue to attack and keep them on their heels and that was really pretty much my mindset.

Q. That being said, how important was that initial push from you guys in the second half, particularly from you when you came out and scored that 10 straight, just to get back into the game and say, Okay, we can just start

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

working from a smaller margin than we were working with for most of the first half?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: I think it was crucial. I think they got it going and they made some shots and got into a rhythm to start the end of the second half. And for us, it was like the first five minutes, let's just win that and kind of go from there. And at the end of the day we, yeah, I scored 10 straight, but we did a lot of good things as a whole defensively, offensively, pushing the pace, getting stops, rebounding the ball, not letting them have extra possessions. And I think that was the biggest thing for us, continuing to be the aggressor and understand that we got to be able to just punch first. And it's not always going to be easy to do it from the beginning of the game. It's not going to be sunshine and rainbows throughout a playoff game. It's going to be stuff that we do wrong and stuff that we got to go ahead and correct and mistakes we got to fix and I think that was what you saw from us as a whole, just go out there and making plays, JC picking up full court, Bojan trying to go ahead and deny the outlet, Royce doing a hell of a job on those guys, Joe as well, and Rudy being Rudy. But winning the 50/50 balls, those are the little things that set you over the top in a playoff game.

Q. Kawhi didn't guard you a lot today, but they did put him on you late. You still had success, especially getting Kennard in pick-and-rolls. When you have Kawhi on you, what, if anything, changes for you or for your mentality?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: Got to be strong with the ball. That's really it. As far as attacking, everything kind of stays the same, but the loose, the playing around with it, he's there and at the end of the day, he has the height advantage and the length, so even if I make a move, he's still there. So being able to manipulate things throughout the game, whether it's a screen or stuff like that, and like I said, there's things I definitely can be better at. I had a terrible turnover with 49 seconds left at half court, stupid pass, like, stuff like that, for me, it's, like, Okay, how do I kind of manipulate the game? I know I did it against Memphis and I got to be able to do it now and I did an okay job of it, and I think that I can be better and I think I'm going to probably see that matchup a lot more and understanding that he's first team on defense for a reason and I just got to go out there and just have my A-game and not necessarily attack to score, but attack to create and find guys as well.

Q. Considering the circumstances you're playing tonight, how would you compare this performance to some of your playoff performances last year in the bubble?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: I mean, this was good, in my

opinion. But at the end of the day, I'm kind of at a point where I'm, like, doesn't matter anymore. It's, we're on to Game 2, but definitely with -- I'm just happy with how I was able to kind of control the pace. I think that's something I've really tried to make strides in throughout my career and being efficient, and when I say efficient, I don't mean just the shot chart. I mean, like, turnovers or being able to manipulate the game, being able to pick things and make the right reads. So, for me, I was really happy with my progress in that way. There's definitely stuff I can do better for sure and I think hopefully continue to go out there and make the right reads, but as far as where do I put it as far as games, I don't really know. At the end of the day, I know that we got to do this three more times. We got to win three more times. That's really where I'm at. It's great to get a Game 1 win and at the end of the day, we did what we were supposed to do. We won at home and we got to do the same thing in Game 2.

Q. I know you're locked in to this series and trying to figure out how to beat the Clippers four times. I wonder if you are at all cognizant of the notion of the rest of these playoffs being very wide open and that somebody is going to win a championship that hasn't -- that either has never won one or hasn't won one in a very long time.

DONOVAN MITCHELL: Yeah, it's -- I have social media, so I'm always on it, you know what I mean? So, like, I see he it. I'm not going to lie. But like you -- so I see the Tweets, we all do. I think the best thing about it is that's what makes these games so competitive. The Clippers have never -- correct me if I'm wrong -- but have never won a championship, we have never won one, I don't know, Phoenix has never won one. You look at how competitive these games are, I think that's what makes this playoffs so intense, so exciting. I think that's what creates a great environment. I think that's what makes this game a lot of fun and I think for us our mindset is, look, we got three -- one game at a time. We got this one, we got to get the next one and understanding that we can do something special. We thought that right after the bubble that we can do something special as a group. We took care of business in the regular season, that's over with now. We took care of business in the first round, that's other with now. We took care of business tonight, that's over with now. And we got to go ahead and focus on Game 2.

But it's definitely out there, it's definitely something that we see and we think we can, we have the team to do it, but we got to go out there and hone in on the little details and not get complacent and satisfied with where we're at and be ready to hoop.

Q. You got pretty big defensive plays from Bojan and



Jordan and Joe, guys who aren't really celebrated for their defense during the regular season. What did you see from them in their effort especially against Kawhi and Paul George?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: There's a saying that it's like by any means necessary. And I think that's what you saw from a lot of us tonight. I think that's what it's going to take to beat this team in four, in, beat and get four wins against this team. We all got to do our part. Whether it's, like I said, picking up full court, diving on loose balls, getting those long rebounds, not allowing them second-chance points, getting in the paint, creating and when you have a guy like Mike out, it's a big loss, but for us it's like, okay, how do we fix it, how do we manage it. I think Jordan's approach coming out doing what he does on the offensive end, but also being on the defensive end. Bojan communicating. We all know what Rudy's going to do, but Joe coming out there doing what he does as well. And I think that's really where, that's really where it is and what's going to help us win these games is we got to do it by any means necessary, whether it's diving on the floor or whatever we got to do, we got to do it hard and we got to do it with pace and executing. If you make a mistake, make an aggressive one, don't be kind of complacent and lax in your movements. I think that's what you saw from us in the second half.

Q. I hear you criticizing yourself on what many people would call a stellar performance, but I also want to look at, I noticed before that you closed your eyes and take deep breaths at the free-throw line but maybe it was just highlighted even more so with such a loud crowd tonight. How long has that been a part of your routine and what would you say, why you do that before your free throws?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: I've been doing it for a while, but I think everybody -- last week we had a conversation about that, people thought I just did it for TV. But I had a session with Kyle Korver, a few years back, and one of the things he talked to me about was breathing in certain situations and that was the situation for me. I don't really meditate much, but for me it's like, just breathe, that's your time to rest, that's your time to focus, that's your time to kind of let go and kind of just go into a different element and focus on -- for me I put myself in back to my workouts, that's really that's what it is for me. And that's kind of one of the strongest -- I don't know what the word is -- like a pose -- I guess that's one of the strongest things you can do for your body is kind of close your eyes and breathe, especially in high-intensity situations. We don't do much of that as athletes, we don't go out there and take care of that mental part, especially live action during the game. So any chance I can I do that and especially at the free-throw line,

just giving myself time to breathe and rest and go ahead and execute the free throw, but also get myself a time to kind of cool down a little bit.

Q. Did it feel a little different with how loud the crowd was tonight?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: Yeah, it definitely did, but you got to put yourself into -- that's why I put myself into where, moments where I worked out. Where it's like me in the gym -- at the end of the day that's what it is -- me in the gym and I'm shooting free throws, dead tired after a workout. And that's why you make as many as you make in a row for those moments and that's really what it is. For me doesn't matter if it's 22, 60,000, doesn't matter how many people in the arena, at the end of the day it's the same thing you are doing in the summer when you're working out, the only difference is you got people watching.

Q. So Rudy had a huge block at the end of the game, so I want to know what is it like for you to watch Rudy on a defensive sequence like the one at the end of the game?

DONOVAN MITCHELL: You kind of have just like a sense that something good's going to happen. You don't know how or what, but once I saw the swing go to him, he thrives in those moments. He definitely hears the chatter that he can't guard outside the paint. So those are like moments that he like lives for. And when he caught it, Morris caught it, I was like, okay, big boy's going to have this moment. I think that was, that's what you saw tonight. And you saw me put my hand up, because I'm like, thank God he blocked it, because I took a terrible shot at the end of the game. But like he's our back bone defensively, man, and you saw it on nights like tonight. He came out there and blocked his shots, running the floor, doing his thing and when you get the isos like that you have the ultimate faith, because he's the two-time about to be three-time Defensive Player of the Year. So we have the utmost faith in his defense and what he does. And moments like that when he's doing it on the playoff stage, I'm happy for him, we're all happy, because he's showing the world what he's capable of.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...