

LA Clippers Media Conference

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Nicolas Batum

Press Conference

Q. Nico, middle of the season you felt like you wanted to come to the Clippers because you guys shared a similar redemption story in your mind. What was the last year like and how do you view your future as you enter free agency?

NICOLAS BATUM: Back in November, if someone would have tell me that I would still be playing basketball late June and compete for something big, and play, and be on the court and play, like I wouldn't believe it. I was in a bad place mentally couple months ago and now look where I am right now, just incredible. It's amazing what happened to me this year.

I can't thank enough the Clippers organization for giving me a chance to be a basketball player again. I wasn't really sure what I could do this year, and they gave me a chance to be a player again. It's a blessing for me.

Q. Obviously PG has been a really good playoff performer in the past as well, but what did you see specifically and personally grow from him this year? What did you see him improve on?

NICOLAS BATUM: You know, just talking about the playoffs, this first round, Kawhi was amazing against the Mavs, especially in Game 6.

And you know, PG did his job because he knew like -- he knew he was doing his job; it's for sure when Kawhi went down, he had to take over, and he did in a good way, in a big way. I mean, Game 5 in Utah and then the rest of the series, and even in this series, the numbers don't lie. He was amazing. He carried us, like in the last game in Phoenix all those games, he has been unbelievable.

I don't really care what people say about that guy. I think he redeemed himself and he show that he's a big-time player in this league, and he deserve all the praise in the world. I'm a big fan of his, and I'm very happy for him. I'm very happy for him that he could show the world who he is.



Q. When you got here, a lot of people talked about how you were the glue guy, the connector. I'd love your perspective on how through the course of all the adversity this season, COVID and injuries, the team really seemed to stay together till the end. How do you think that happened?

NICOLAS BATUM: We had to do it. We had no choice. We had injuries during the season. You know, a guy has to step up, some guy has to play more, some guy has to play less, role position is different, and we stuck together. The group we had this year, we find a way to stick together and that was kind of my job, too, to make sure everything connects.

Like some game I play the five; some game I play the four; some game I have to do this; some game I have to do that. And so I have to make sure that by doing that, the rest of the group was good to perform, and I think we did a good job. We fell short, of course. We wanted to keep playing one more series and win it, but you know, we can be proud of what would he have done this year.

Q. Finishing the season in front of a packed house last night, can you think back to what it was like in the beginning of the year in an empty arena and cardboard cutouts and what that journey was like?

NICOLAS BATUM: That's what I said in Utah after Game 6: This is what basketball is all about. It's ten guys playing on court with, 20,000 people cheering in the stands. That's why we play basketball, too, to get this connection in this moment, those moments with the fans.

When we made big plays and you have the crowd hearing for you, or on the road against you because that can get you going, as well, I mean, that's why we play this game, too.

Q. I was wondering, you guys were rarely healthy this season, but was there a point in the season or in this playoff run that you thought, man, this is how good we can be? This is what we can look like, and when was that and what were you thinking about the potential of this team?

NICOLAS BATUM: I mean, of course if we have no



injuries, maybe this would have been different, but we never know, and then -- because if the Lakers or Brooklyn or now Milwaukee, I mean, if the story would have been different, maybe. We don't know. We never know.

That's why Phoenix is a good team because -- and congrats to them, and give them credit, because they find a way to go through adversity.

But we couldn't; maybe the story had been different. We miss Kawhi, we miss Serge, we miss Zu, three big key. Maybe we could have done it anyway. But like I said all year long, we had injuries, I think that helped us. That's why maybe we are one of the only team that got a lot of injuries to move on because we played like that all year long, so we're not really surprised when that happens. Okay, what can we do; okay we knew what we have to do. We know, okay, now it's on PG's shoulders and now Mookie has to step up, Reggie got to do this, Nico got to do that, T-Mann, Luke. That kind of help us, as I say, but if we could avoid that and have the full strength, I think we'd be better for sure.

Q. Is there anything that you can think of that this team can use, whether it's an intangible or whether it's something that's added to personnel, is there something that this team could use coming back next season?

NICOLAS BATUM: I don't know. I mean, that team, that situation, that was a crazy year, COVID year, short season. Like I think if we get back to our normal schedule, we'll be back to normal.

Q. I'm just curious, you and Reggie specifically developed a really incredible bond with the fans. Every year, you got the Batum Battalion behind you, Reggie got Reggie chants last night and throughout the playoffs. How will that kind of response and connection -- does that kind of thing affect your decision in free agency to return at all?

NICOLAS BATUM: Of course. It wasn't the case the last two years for me, so that was pretty cool to have some support like that. I mean, that was fair, I deserved it the last two years. But the Batum Battalion, I wasn't expecting that. That was pretty cool.

And the fans in general, they welcome me with open arms. I know they have some doubts about me when I got here, but the way they greet me, the way they greet me, welcomed me and my family, it was great, and I can't thank them enough because that was a great year. That was a special year for me.

Like I said earlier, I had no idea it could end up that way as a basketball player and have a fan base again. That was a special year and I still can't believe it to be honest. I loved it, so thank you, guys.

Q. Did you surprise maybe even yourself, playing 40 minutes at some point in the playoffs, small ball lineup, you said you were obviously watching Draymond and those kind of guys to learn; did you surprise yourself the way you played this year?

NICOLAS BATUM: A little bit, yes. I mean, kind of because when you start like listening all the noise outside, then you say, maybe I am done for sure. And you come back and you're playing that well and the team, you're playing for something, I was kind of surprised like, oh, maybe I'm not that bad, actually. So I was kind of surprised sometime and maybe people were wrong about me, and I was wrong about myself maybe.

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