

LA Clippers Media Conference

Sunday, April 16, 2023
Los Angeles, California, USA

Kawhi Leonard

Postgame Press Conference



Los Angeles Clippers 115, Phoenix Suns 110

Q. For your first game back, looked like you scored more points every quarter. How did you understand how they were guarding you and have more success as the game went along?

KAWHI LEONARD: I mean, the points you score doesn't mean that you figured out how they guard you. But I mean just being aggressive all game pretty much. Trying to win. Shots fell -- fell for me. You know, we continued to play well.

Q. Russ didn't have a great shooting game but he did pretty much everything else for you guys on the court, deflection, steals, blocks. What did you see from him especially down the stretch when he wasn't able to make shots but do all the other things for you guys?

KAWHI LEONARD: The same things you just said, making plays, getting deflections off balls, offensive rebounding, getting us into our sets. It's playoff basketball. You know, you might have your best night shooting but you have to impact the game some type of way and he did that tonight.

Q. It's only Game 1 but did they throw anything at you that you didn't expect?

KAWHI LEONARD: No. I expected everything, you know that, they did. Like I said, we were able to keep being aggressive and make plays out of either their double teams or when they fully crowd us. They are a good defensive team.

Q. Obviously you weren't expecting to not have Paul this series but is this kind of what you were hoping and expecting and envisioning when you guys were looking to get Russ to join you guys?

KAWHI LEONARD: Pretty much knew he was out from the beginning when he had his injury, but yeah, I mean, you know, he's a Hall of Fame point guard. He's been big in

playoffs before. He's been to the Finals. I expect him to play great and you know do his job.

Q. And how did it feel for you to be back in the playoffs after all you've gone through?

KAWHI LEONARD: I mean, it felt good. But it's just another game and it's tighter now, and like I said before, you have opportunity to win a championship, so we've got to give it our all. It's just Game 1, so we've got a lot to do.

Q. You talked in the recent days about one of the keys being all bought in on the game plan and everyone pulling the same direction. Where did you see that tonight working for your advantage?

KAWHI LEONARD: At times, just, you know, they have got great players, great scorers. Just being bought into the game plan with that and just knowing, be ready for those guys to come out and be aggressive and being in the right spots and not putting your head down when KD or Book or Paul makes good shots, and Ayton, as well when they make tough shots, just keep at it. But we'll see if we have some carryover, consistency, that's what it's been about with us all year.

Q. How did you feel defensive rotations on the back end were tonight, especially like when KD or Book draws two and you have to scramble out of that?

KAWHI LEONARD: I think we did a pretty good job. You know, got to look at the film and see where it could be better. Like I said, hopefully we could have some carryover and do it again.

Q. It's rare that players who play the same position go against each other like this with you and Kevin, and there's been playoff series where you've been hurt and he's been hurt and you guys haven't been able to share the floor at the same time. What's it like competing against someone who maybe brings out the best in you?

KAWHI LEONARD: It's great. He's an all-time player right there. Hall of Famer. You know, that's what it's about. You have an opportunity to play great, and you just want the opportunity, and if it's win, lose or draw, it's about



giving your best out there, and you're able to play against the best.

So yeah, just got to keep having fun with it. Yeah, I mean, it's good. It's playoff basketball.

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