

WNBA Finals: Las Vegas vs. Phoenix

Friday, October 3, 2025

Phoenix Mercury

Nate Tibbetts

Game 1: Postgame



Aces 89, Mercury 86

Q. Alyssa Thomas was shaking out her hand a lot at the end of the game. Do you have any update or anything, what's going on with that?

NATE TIBBETTS: I don't, I'm sorry.

Q. Kah had that hot first half and kind of cooled in the second. From your perspective, what kind of changed there? I don't know if they adjusted their defense a little bit.

NATE TIBBETTS: Yeah, they did. They went zone. We got up, I don't know if it was nine, something like that, and they went zone. Kind of made us stand a little bit.

I thought we had some good looks. Give them credit for mixing up their defense. I thought it was a good adjustment. We didn't handle it well, and that was part of the reason she didn't get as many shots in the second half as them going to that zone.

Q. The last possession, it seemed like you were holding the ball for a bit, maybe to get the last shot, and it probably wasn't the look you were looking for, or was it?

NATE TIBBETTS: No. We ran a play to get Kahleah a look. They did a good job of switching out and we had one more option off of that. They switched. I probably should have ran out and called another time-out with about six seconds to go. It made it a little tougher that it was at the other end, but they made a good defensive stand there.

Q. Your team has played really well in fourth quarters over the Playoffs. What do you attribute the lack of discipline in this one to?

NATE TIBBETTS: I'll have to watch the film. We've been in a ton of close games. We have played well in the fourth. I thought we did some good things in this fourth quarter,

also.

They made a couple of plays down the stretch; we didn't. That's why this is going to be a great series, right? It's going to come down to the last possessions of the game. They've been through it together, and we've handled these situations very well.

I thought we had some good looks, and they just didn't go down.

Q. Their bench play specifically Dana and Jewell, made it obviously pretty difficult. Is it something you anticipated? Obviously you knew they were dangerous, but how much impact did you see that having and having to readjust?

NATE TIBBETTS: Yeah, Jewell has been a premier player in our league. These moments aren't too big for her. Dana, give her a lot of credit. That's part of the reason they've gone on this run. She's played extremely well.

Obviously we've got to do a better job of finding them earlier. They hit a bunch of threes, seven between them, and so that's going to be tough to overcome.

I thought we did a great job on A'ja and Jackie, but those two definitely pushed them to a victory today.

Q. Obviously you guys have been here before, best-of-seven series. What is the mindset and message to the team right now?

NATE TIBBETTS: Yeah. Well, we haven't been best-of-seven but we've been down after the first game. Yeah, it's the first of four. You always want to try to get one early.

We put ourselves in a position, right. These are two of the best teams. That's why we're the last two standing. We talked about it earlier; we've made some of these plays down the stretch. We didn't make them tonight. But we'll be ready on Sunday.

Q. In general in that first half and really through the

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early portion of the third quarter, the mismatch really stood out in that one. In general how do you balance the mismatch with some of the switches that the Aces have been tossing out and maintaining your half-court flow?

NATE TIBBETTS: It's one of those things as the year has gone on, we've continued to get better at finding mismatches, and that's something that we will continue to do. It's been a big part of our offense.

Without forcing it, right, we're going to find it, and if we don't, then we've got to play to the second side. We had some really good possessions through the first three quarters, and we're going to have to continue to play that way offensively.

Q. I'm curious how much you thought this game really showed how much the series will be about speed versus length, especially with sort of how the Aces in particular Dana Evans was able to exploit DeWanna defensively. How do you counter that?

NATE TIBBETTS: I don't think she exploited her defensively. I'll have to see who she scored on, when she did.

They've got their strengths, bringing -- she's really giving them some energy offensively with the second unit, Dana has, and our bench has been really good, too, in these Playoffs. Their bench outplayed ours tonight, but our bench has won us a lot of games in these Playoffs.

We're going to play our style. They're going to play their style. The best team is going to win.

Q. When Whitcomb had to go to the locker room, you had to change what you've been playing the rotation group you've been playing in the fourth quarter. How much difference do you think that made? And Sabally having had foul trouble and that sort of stuff?

NATE TIBBETTS: Yeah, I haven't really had time to process that, but we've had a pretty set rotation. I'm glad Sami came back. I haven't even really heard what had happened. Yeah, then Sa got her fifth foul and that changed some things for us, too.

Different people are going to have to step up at different times. We've talked about that. We'll take a look at the tape and be better on Sunday.

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