

# WNBA Finals: Las Vegas vs. Phoenix

Sunday, October 5, 2025

Phoenix Mercury

Nate Tibbetts

Game 2: Postgame



Aces - 91, Mercury - 78

**Q. Obviously the game didn't go how you wanted. What experiences have you had with this team this year that will kind of help you reset for Game 3?**

NATE TIBBETTS: I mean, give the Aces credit. They played a really good game today.

What gives me confidence is we've been down before, we've been overlooked. Obviously people are going to start talking about how good Las Vegas has been, and they should, but we've kind of always bounced back.

We're excited to go home, play in our home arena. Vegas did what they were supposed to do. I think we played a really good Game 1, and they came out and they were ready today.

**Q. That second quarter -- actually, when did you feel the momentum start to shift in this game? I kind of look at that second quarter.**

NATE TIBBETTS: Yeah, second quarter.

**Q. What about that second quarter?**

NATE TIBBETTS: We just kind of held the ball, over-dribbled the ball. Listen, I've been really proud of our offense the last four or five games, how we've moved it. We found matchups that we like. We did not do a good job of that today. I'm not sure, it's probably some of us and some of Vegas.

We need to do a better job of finding the mismatches either in the post or in the pick-and-roll. In the second quarter we just kind of stood and watched, and you can't do that against a team like this.

**Q. I'm curious how you thought AT being in foul trouble, I guess early in that third, impacted the flow of the game for you all and even in the first half too.**

NATE TIBBETTS: She hasn't been in much foul trouble all playoffs. Today we found ourselves in that situation. I think, as you go through your playoff journey, you face different obstacles. That was one today.

Obviously we would love to keep her on A'ja as much as we can. Because of the fouls, we had to change that matchup.

**Q. Talk about some of the challenges of, taller team on paper, Aces play a lot of guards, but they won the rebound battle tonight. What's it like -- what are you telling your players to prepare for the smaller defenders on the inside, scrapping, hands at some of the balls, and coming away with the rebounds?**

NATE TIBBETTS: They've got a veteran group. They've played undersized or small with four guards around A'ja all year. They've done a great job with their switching package, and then those guards playing down there in the post. We just need to recognize and understand because we have a size advantage, it's not going to be easy.

So we've got to be stronger with the ball, and if we don't like it, we've got to move it.

**Q. I know you have confidence in your team, but since the second half of the first game, outside of Kah -- they shut Kah down in the second half of Game 1. This game she goes off. The supporting cast beyond the big three, how important is it to get them involved? Are you confident you can get some of the role players outside of the big three involved against this Aces defense?**

NATE TIBBETTS: Yeah, I'm super confident in that group. They helped carry us all season long. Our big three has probably got going the most during the playoffs, but yeah, I think -- well, I know this is a group that we trust, we believe in each other. We've got to see the ball go in a little bit to start feeling good about ourselves. But offensively in the second quarter, it really hurt us.

Again, we're here because of our defense. To give up 89



points in Game 1 and 91 in Game 2, I know that they're a really good offensive team, they've got great players, but we have to be better at the defensive end.

**Q. It felt like a pretty stark shift in approach from Alyssa Thomas offensively, a lot of her as the initiator and pick-and-roll handler in Game 1, more of her as roller and post threat in Game 2. How much of that was your plan headed in versus what Vegas dictated offense defensively?**

NATE TIBBETTS: I think it was more us than how they decided to guard it. It's something that we'll look at. How can we be better? I don't know how many times we got to it, but not enough, with the success that we had in Game 1. That's something that we'll have to look at more moving forward.

**Q. You guys shoot just 17, 18% from three, second lowest mark of the playoffs, and Satou was 2 of 9. What do you think of your three-point shot quality tonight?**

NATE TIBBETTS: Obviously the number is fine. I didn't think we got the same kind of threes that we did in Game 1. I thought in Game 1 it was like from one side to the other side, good versus great. The ball just wasn't popping the way it has been.

Some of it was just us. I thought we were pretty stagnant offensively, and then we tried to force it a little bit ourselves and tried to go get it, and that's part of us just kind of figuring out as a group.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the decision to go deeper into your bench there in that fourth quarter. What kind of went behind that decision, and will we be seeing more of the latter half of the bench going forward?**

NATE TIBBETTS: No. I think we just felt like the game, especially with Sa going down -- I don't know, I think it was her ankle -- just being smart moving forward, not risking any more injury.

**Q. On that note, Nate, is there any update on Satou? Is there any concern about that ankle?**

NATE TIBBETTS: They were evaluating her when I left, so I'm not sure.

**Q. Second question too, you brought up the defense. Last game wasn't what you wanted it to be. This game obviously as well giving up over 90. Are you seeing the same sorts of issues across both games on that end of the floor, and where do you feel like you guys**

**really need to improve the most going back to Phoenix?**

NATE TIBBETTS: I would say every game brings something different. Last game their bench really got going with Jewell and Dana, and we did a pretty good job on A'ja and Jackie. A'ja and Jackie were better today.

Yeah, I think just overall, like our commitment and tenacity and toughness at that defensive end, we need to find that. I think going home with that crowd behind us we'll be better defensively.

**Q. When talking about like Alyssa Thomas and her physicality, at what point do you kind of have to hold her back a little bit to preserve your team's momentum or even her health?**

NATE TIBBETTS: There is no holding back AT. She is who she is. That's why we love her. That's why she's the player that she is.

The thing that I just get disappointed in is hearing our officials say that she's hard to officiate because she plays so physical.

Yeah, AT is going to be AT. We want her to be AT because she's a helluva player. We want her playing with that downhill force.

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