

WNBA Finals: Las Vegas vs. Phoenix

Friday, October 10, 2025

Phoenix Mercury

Nate Tibbetts

Game 4: Postgame



Aces 97, Mercury 86

Q. (Off microphone).

NATE TIBBETTS: We should've been. Yeah, she shot as many free throws as our whole team, that's tough to overcome.

Q. Did you say anything to Gina or did Gina say anything to you as an explanation?

NATE TIBBETTS: I did not get an explanation. To be honest, what I said initially probably, you know, I deserved a technical for sure, but I walked away and all of a sudden, I thought they gave Mo another one. I don't know if she thought I said something else, I'm not sure.

Then no explanation from Roy or any of them.

Q. Could you just talk about how you felt Brown kind of impacted the game to a certain degree tonight and also what you thought having Sabally out, what did that do?

NATE TIBBETTS: I think any time you lose a player of Satou's caliber, that's going to change the positions we've been in. We've been in a pretty tight eight-player rotation for the last month and a half, and everyone kind of knows their roles. I thought in the first half some of our offensive execution, it kind of threw some stuff off just as far as people were kind of not in the spots that they typically are.

Yeah, I thought Kalani did an awesome job. Obviously, she hasn't played as much as she wanted to this year. I thought she handled it super professionally.

I was proud of how she played tonight. She did a good job.

Q. What have you seen from Kristi Toliver? She took over as the associate head coach after your ejection tonight. How do you make a case for Kristi Toliver's candidate as head coach in the future?

NATE TIBBETTS: I think KT is ready. I've spoke on it before. I don't love -- I don't think it's fair to her to put her in that position in a close-out game. It's not what I'm goal was but I'm sure she handled it awesome. Obviously I'm watching on TV, and I thought she did a great job.

Yeah, she's ready. It's like any of these jobs, the interview is one thing, but day to day, the approach, that tells a whole different story.

I think she's deserving. I think she's ready. And now an organization has to give her a shot.

Q. It's a tough loss. I'm sorry for going back to these technicals. I can't recall a game where it was ever 4-0, right? Natasha Mack was on the court for 1:52, she picked up two fouls. You put in Kalani in the first quarter, she was on the court maybe four minutes, picked up two fouls. What did you say to the ref other than that? What did you say to the ref to make him kick you out?

NATE TIBBETTS: I can't remember what I said, and I probably don't need to repeat it. Yeah, it's just the inconsistencies night to night.

Yeah, in a close-out game for them to shoot 35 free throws, it's not ideal. I thought early in the playoffs they let teams play a little bit more, but tonight that was not the case.

Q. Now that that's out of the way, what can you say about Alyssa Thomas out there playing with one arm? That may be the craziest thing I've seen.

NATE TIBBETTS: I haven't got to speak to her about what happened with her shoulder. Obviously she's had shoulder issues. From what I understand they got a couple scans or X-rays and everything came back okay.

Yeah, she's one of the toughest players I've ever been around, if not the toughest. Her competitive spirit and will to win. Listen, I wanted to win for our organization and our city, but more than that, I wanted to win for AT because I

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know how much she wears it on her sleeve and how much she just, she wants to win at the highest level. She has not won a championship yet. That's her ultimate goal. That's her drive.

I feel for her because she takes so much pride in it. There's some people that play the game because they're good at it. Some play because they like it. She loves it. She loves it. I respect the hell out of her for that.

Q. Let's talk about another one of your players. I know you've had Kah for a couple years now. How have you seen her grow? How much do you think this will fuel her to have a great year next year?

NATE TIBBETTS: Kah took a chance on an organization that won nine games before she decided to come over here. Nick had just taken on a new coach from a different league that a lot of people weren't excited that I was coming either, and she was willing to sit down with us and talk to us about our future together. She is definitely a big, big part of why we're here.

She loves the bright lights. She came out tonight and did an amazing job. Yeah, just her leadership and growth as a player has been fun to watch, and I just love coaching her every day.

Q. Just to piggy-back off of what you were saying about how fans weren't happy about you coming here. Now that you've gotten them this far in your second season and with so much turnover that coaches have in this industry, do you feel like you've won the fans over, the Mercury fans over, and do you feel like you've cemented your job with so many coaches losing their jobs?

NATE TIBBETTS: I don't know if your job is ever safe as a coach. I don't think -- I'm not on social media, so like I don't see everything that was said. Obviously friends and family. Wasn't a popular hire at the time.

Listen, I just try my best every day. You've got to have great players to get to where we're at. We've got a great organization, great ownership that supports us in the right way.

Yeah, I'm super thankful to be here. I've learned a lot as a coach. It's challenging and exciting and awesome -- all in one day.

I think we're building something pretty cool and special here, and I'm thankful for this opportunity.

Q. Just kind of reflecting on this series, it felt like it

wasn't necessarily the same in terms of you all kind of controlling the margins, all of the things that you consider margins. What did you feel like kind of went into that, and how did you feel like you all kind of, assessing the adjustments and things like that that you made over the course of the series?

NATE TIBBETTS: I think we ran into a really good team. We ran into a team that has been through it together. We ran into a team that had the ultimate belief and trust that they could get it done as a unit with a great coach that has been through this.

Yeah, we had our chances, and I liked us coming into The Finals. You get Game 1, and things change a little bit. Maybe our belief and momentum and all those types of things. But that's what a seven-game series brings is what you're talking about, the changes and the rotations and the adjustments and things like that.

I thought we made some good changes along the way. I'm sure I'll sit down and watch it in a couple weeks or a month after letting it settle down. But I'm proud of our group. I think there was some projection that we had like 1.7 percent chance to win it coming into the playoffs. We had maybe the toughest road to get here and played the two teams that were playing for championships that were in the championship a year ago.

Yeah, I wish we could have some things back, but I'm so damn proud of this group and where we ended up.

Q. From a more systemic perspective, what kind of changes would you want to see to the officiating next year?

NATE TIBBETTS: I think just consistency across the board. Again, I came from a league that I thought that there was real direction and growth in continuity of staffs. There's change in this league. The product is continuing to get better. There's more eyes on it, and I think the officiating has to grow with the league.

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