

NBA Eastern Conference Finals: Heat vs. Celtics

Monday, May 29, 2023

Boston Celtics

Jayson Tatum

Game 6: Postgame

Miami Heat 103, Boston Celtics 84

Q. Can you take us through the first play, what happened with your ankle and how did that impact you for the rest of the game?

JAYSON TATUM: I saw the video, I saw it after the game, that I came down on my ankle. It's tough because it kind of impacted me the rest of the night. It swelled up and it was just frustrating that I was kind of like a shell of myself. It was tough to move. Just frustrating. Especially it happening on the first play.

Q. What happened with the team effort? Seems like you guys couldn't get shots down. They did. You guys got discouraged. What happened out there tonight as a whole?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, I think just the not shooting the ball well had an effect on us throughout the game. And it just kind of snowballed.

Q. With the sprained ankle, Game 7, no margin for error, is there a tendency to kind of look back at maybe the Game 2 where you guys had an opportunity to win and maybe missed opportunities in the past that wouldn't have put you in a position like this?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, you can't go through life talking about what you could have, you should have done. S--- happens and the past is the past. We fought like hell to give ourselves a chance today. Just not the outcome that we anticipated.

Q. Losing at home again. You had the loss at home last year and three losses at home in this series. Can you explain what it was about home that made things so difficult?

JAYSON TATUM: It's not difficult to play at home. We didn't play well the first two games at home this series and they did. They played well tonight and we didn't. You don't

EASTERN CONFERENCE FINALS

want it to be like that. It's called home-court advantage for a reason. But it's not difficult to play here. We got great fans. I wish the outcome was different at home games for us.

Q. You and Jaylen have obviously been through it all together since day one. How important is it for this team to keep him here long-term as he goes into extension talks this summer?

JAYSON TATUM: It's extremely important. He's one of the best players in this league. He plays both ends of the ball and still is relatively young. And he's accomplished a lot so far in his career. So, I think it's extremely important.

Q. Can you describe just how much your mobility was limited by the ankle and kind of what it took for you mentally to kind of grind through it and still play those minutes and do it in a significant way?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, I don't want nobody to feel bad for me. Unfortunately, injuries are a part of this game. I've been fortunate enough, up until this point I never missed games. I played 95 percent of the games since I've been in the league. Top two in minutes since I've been in the league. It just was an unfortunate fall tonight on the first play of the game. Something I was trying to battle through throughout the game.

Q. You guys have talked so much about how you need to be a defense-first team over the years and this year there was kind of a balance of being offensive and defense. So when you guys locked into defense earlier, or later in the series you came back. Then tonight you guys couldn't get stops and you weren't really healthy enough to kind of run the offense and it kind of fell apart. So what do you think needs to change about the way you guys visualize, how you emphasize defense to turn into offense?

JAYSON TATUM: I think we're at our best when -- and I think these last three games, besides tonight, we really honed in on the defensive end. We showed how special and good that we can be as a unit. We didn't shoot the ball necessarily well, but that's part of being in this league. Offense fluctuates through, from night to night. But defense can always, for the most part, maintain. Even when we miss shots, you still got to lock in on the

defensive end. And, yeah, even tonight, they had 50 points at halftime. Obviously, the game got away at the end. But defense is obviously extremely important.

Q. You guys had a lot of success with this group in the last few years. This year in particular you guys were considered title favorites coming out of the first round here. Does this make it sting a little bit more knowing that the golden opportunity you guys had here after coming so close last season?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, it's tough. It's as simple as that. It's tough. You made it to the Conference Finals again and so close to getting back to The Finals and giving yourself another chance and, yeah, I mean, as you would expect, it's tough to lose.

Q. Along those same lines, you guys have come close now a number of times. What needs to change for you, for the team, for the organization to kind of get over the hump?

JAYSON TATUM: To win a championship?

Q. Yeah.

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, we've shown that we can get there. I mean, s---, we get to the Conference Finals, it's my fourth time in six years. I been to the Finals once. We know we had a special opportunity this year. We just fell a little bit short. It's not like we're not capable, we don't have the talent, you know, we do. Just didn't go our way this year.

Q. Where do you think it went wrong this year to kind of let that opportunity go away?

JAYSON TATUM: That's a great question. We didn't play well enough to win this series for a majority of it. Bad third quarter of the first game. Bad fourth quarter of the second game. They beat us the third game. We didn't play well at all. Won three in a row. Then tonight was just tough. So, we just didn't play well enough to win this series.

Q. How would you, with that said, how would you look at Joe, who had a tough start, obviously thrown into that position as the interim, and then you guys grew as team. How would you look at what Joe was able to do with you guys all season and, as you went along, grow with him?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, it was his first year, we got to the Conference Finals Game 7. I don't think people give him or us enough credit that, two days before season starts, we find out we're going to have a new coach. We

didn't have Rob the first 25, 30 games of the season, we never got a chance to have Gallo [Danilo Gallinari], and we got a new coach one day before Media Day. You know, that was an adjustment. We all figured it out. Obviously, we wanted to win the championship. Didn't happen.

But I think Joe did a great job. We won 50-some odd games. We got to the Game 7 Conference Finals. Obviously, everybody can be better, learn from this. But I think Joe did a great job this year.

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