

NBA Finals: Heat vs. Nuggets

Saturday, June 3, 2023

Miami Heat

Jimmy Butler

Practice Day



Q. Jimmy, the Nuggets' back line defenders have a ton of length in guys like Gorton and Porter. How much did that affect you having a lower usage with the ball in Game 1?

JIMMY BUTLER: Not much. I just think I've got to do a better job of getting the ball, demanding the ball, being more aggressive. That's just that, and that will change come Game 2. Yes, they do have some really good defenders, but I have seen really good defenders before.

Q. Can you explain the chess match of using the pump fake to get defenders in the air when they game-plan to stay down?

JIMMY BUTLER: I don't think I shot-faked a lot, though. I think I was just passing the ball to the open guy, which I will continue to do. Maybe I've got to get more layups, more dunks, more attempts at the rim to free our shooters a lot more often.

But I think this whole playoff season has been a chess match for everybody on this team, not just myself. So you know, going into Game 2, whatever it takes to win, if I've got to pump-fake five times or 15 times, you've just got to win.

Q. Michael Malone, after Game 1 and even a few minutes ago, said he expects you guys to play with a lot more force in Game 2. What does that mean for you? And secondly, do you feel like you have to be more aggressive, maybe take a couple of shots that are out of your character to just sort of loosen the defense?

JIMMY BUTLER: No. I'm going to continue play the right way. I'm going to pass the ball to my shooters the way I have been playing the entire playoffs, the entire year.

But yeah, I think I've got to be more aggressive putting pressure on the rim. I think that makes everybody's job a lot easier. They definitely follow suit whenever I'm

aggressive on both sides of the ball. So I have to be the one to come out and kick that off the right way, which I will, and we'll see where we end up.

Q. Did you play passive in Game 1?

JIMMY BUTLER: Not at all. I think I played basketball the right way.

Q. What's your process mentally to reset? How did you spend yesterday?

JIMMY BUTLER: Well, my daughter is out here, so ripping and running with her. Played a lot of Spades. Spades didn't go too well for me yesterday, now that I think about it.

I'm going to do an escape room tonight. I think my guys went and saw Spiderman today. Just doing normal stuff, because at the end of the day, I'm as normal as they come. It's not always about basketball. It will never always be about basketball. That's how I regroup. I stay consistent in that because that's what I know I can fall back on. My guys, they are going to love me whether I win or lose. My daughter is going to love me whether I win or lose. So that's what I focus on.

Q. You've had confidence all along in guys like Max and Caleb. Do you feel like you need to say anything to them, given the way they struggled in Game 1, going into tomorrow night?

JIMMY BUTLER: Yeah, I need to say to them: I'm still going to throw you the ball, and if you miss the next ten, if you're open on that 11th one, I'm still going to throw you the ball, because you'll never be the reason why we lose. It's always a group effort. I want you to take the same shots because they are going to be there. We are going to throw you the ball. Stay aggressive because you've been the reason that we have won so many games before. You are going to be the reason that we win games now, and that's never going to change.

I have a lot of faith in those guys. I'm in their corner, Bam is in their corner, Spo, Coach Pat, everybody. So when everybody is in your corner, you only have one job to do:



Shoot the ball.

Q. Despite the fact that Denver shot over 50 percent, you kept them 12 points beneath their playoff scoring average. Where do you build from there defensively?

JIMMY BUTLER: Do that again. Maybe hold them to 12 less points. Hopefully we can win the game. That's it. No matter how many points they score, we just need to score more. Get some more stops, play harder. Do things the right way.

We're okay. We really are. We are very calm. We are very collected. We have so much confidence, still. It's not going anywhere. We're going to believe in one another, always, no matter what, home or away. And we're still going to get four.

Q. No two situations are the same, but you've had some roller coasters in these playoffs. What happens when the team wins three in a row, loses three in a row? What's the ecosystem amongst the players? Forget the coaches. How do you talk to each other? Who speaks, who listens and how do you get yourself set for the next game whether you win or lose?

JIMMY BUTLER: I don't think too much has to be said, I really don't. Down 0-3 up 3-0, you've got to get to four. It's never over. Nobody is ever counted out. You've got to get to four. Once you get to four, it's over with.

So down 0-1, we know we are going to get to four. We are in there laughing, in there smiling, knowing that we could play better. We will play better. We have to be better if we want to win. Not too much is said. It's all about what we're going to do.

Q. How would you describe the Murray/Jokic duo and what they present on the floor?

JIMMY BUTLER: Tough. Tough. They do everything well. You've got to guard both of them, majority of the time with two people. We've got to figure that out because that's coming at us every possession -- if not every possession, damn sure every other possession.

We'll key in on it. We'll lock on it. But it's tough, no matter who it is, guarding those two guys, who are willing passers and can give you 50 on any given night. Then they have shooters everywhere on the floor. But you're going to have to do hard things to get to where you want to get to.

Q. How would you assess Nikola Jokic on the defensive end?

JIMMY BUTLER: I think he does well for what he's able to do. He moves his feet well. He's constantly making guys make decisions whenever they get into the paint. Then his outlet passes from a defensive rebound are very, very elite; that, he's been doing his entire career.

As much as everybody looks at what he does on the offensive side of the ball, he's a hell of a defender, as well.

Q. Staying on Jokic a little bit, if he's always going to be dropping back and staying between you and the rim and then they are also loading up the gaps on you, what's the balance between trying to get downhill but also not going straight into bodies if they are going to throw a lot of bodies in front of you?

JIMMY BUTLER: Pass the ball, which is what I'm going to do. Shoot the ball. Make some shots, which I'm capable of doing, as well. I just don't think we played our best game of basketball, and that's okay. We've just got to be better come tomorrow, which we will be.

But I'm still playing the game the right way. It's not being passive. It's getting my guys involved, because whenever they make shots, my job is a lot easier.

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