

# NBA Finals: Heat vs. Nuggets

Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Miami Heat

Coach Erik Spoelstra

Practice Day



**Q. (No microphone for the first part of the question about Steve Kerr's comments regarding the Miami players' willingness to take on any role.) Talk about that as well as how did you break the news to a vet like Kyle Lowry that he was going to go from a starter to off the bench when he had been a starter for so long?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: I did not see Steve's comments. But I think the context of what you're saying, getting guys to get into roles, buy into something that is bigger than themselves, that's arguably the most important thing when you're trying to build a team that can contend for a championship.

It's elusive. It's tough. You try to be intentional about it. You try to get guys that really care about winning more than anything, even if they have to sacrifice, or also understanding that that's a prerequisite, that you have to sacrifice.

We have a lot of guys that have played a bunch of different roles, that have excelled in different roles, but have had the emotional stability that when their roles have had to change that they're still about the team.

In reference to Kyle, he's all about winning. At this stage in his career, when you have more yesterdays than you have tomorrows, it's really about these kind of competitive moments on the biggest stage. That's what drives him more than anything, is the ultimate competition.

It was a relatively easy decision to take him off the bench because we had to shut him down for five weeks, and when he came back, he had a minutes restriction that he and I were aware of.

The first game he came back I played him 36 minutes, so the head coach got yelled at by everybody. Kyle and I met the next day and we were both laughing about it. We needed to protect each other. The only way to do that was to bring him off the bench so we could control the minutes.

We did that the rest of the year. There was really only about a month left in the season. He excelled in that role.

By the time we got to the Playoffs, even though he could handle more minutes, we just stayed with it, and really secure with that. I think he has embraced that.

Our second unit now is one of our biggest strengths as a team. We were struggling with our second unit for various reasons for most of the season, and he kind of just fixed all that on his own.

**Q. Erik, I know the 30 minutes we see out there aren't exactly the most serious practice time of all time, but it just seems like everybody is really just enjoying where they are right now. Where is the line? How do you both handle the incredible seriousness of what you're trying to do versus enjoying where you are, as well?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, it's an art, not a science, right? There's no perfect formula to that. There's no perfect boom.

We know our group. They live on the razor's edge. There's an edginess to this group. The "on" button is usually on.

I think we've found better ways, more productive ways in the moments in between just to not exhale, not to relax, but just to recharge, get our minds off of that so that you can gear up the next day emotionally, physically, spiritually, all of those things. It's tough to always be on that "on" button.

This group has shown a maturity level to be able to handle both. We'll see tomorrow night. But in a moment like this, yeah, I want our guys relaxing. When we get out of here, I would love for them to get their minds off of it. I know how they all are. They want to be like that all the time.

**Q. He's not the only one who does this, but with Jokic kind of changing the depth of his defensive coverage throughout the game, how unique has that been to prepare for, and how do you think the guys, especially the shooters, have done making those snap reads?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: It is unique. I think that's what you expect at the final level, that there's not going to be absolutes. You have to read the defense, still try to get to our game. We have to be aggressive. Then we have to make the appropriate plays and reads possession by possession.

It could be different the next possession. It could be different within the possession. They're probably having similar discussions about our defense. This is that level. It's the Finals. That's what is required.

The guys have really been working diligently, film sessions and in these practices, to try to get on the same page. But they're a very good defense because of their changing coverages.

**Q. Tyler spoke the other day about still having a degree of pain with the hand. Where does he stand with that? And honestly, as the days are ticking down, your thoughts on his chances of being able to make an appearance during the Finals?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, I don't want to be Nostradamus right now. We're taking it one day at a time. I know that sounds like cliché. He did the practice with the group. He is going to do a full-contact workout after this. We'll evaluate that. We'll meet with the training staff later on today and probably tomorrow, and we'll just continue this process.

He has not been cleared yet, so that's where we are. But we're encouraged by the work that he has been doing.

**Q. You guys won the other night without Jimmy having one of those Jimmy playoff games. But I wanted you to, if you could, take us how you feel the series has gone for him so far.**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: He is a two-way basketball player. He does so many winning things that I think unfortunately when you view maybe a 56-point game, everybody on the outside views that he has to do that every game to impact winning. He understands the levers that contribute to winning.

He is doing it on both sides of the floor. He has an incredibly tough cover defensively; that matters. Then offensively I still just think we have a great place where everybody feels settled. If your role players can step in and start playing great, it's usually because they feel a confidence level from the best players, and that's Jimmy and Bam. They infuse all of our guys to be aggressive.

The way they defend, they're prioritizing protecting the

paint against him, so he has to make the right reads. Then down the stretch, those were his best moments. That's really key for us when you're in those close games.

But whatever, however many points he had in the last six minutes, his fingerprints were all over the game down the stretch.

**Q. Obviously Jokic is so unique, but when he has the ball, how does it alter the way you guys usually help off of the guys around him just because of his passing ability?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, you know the term when you say your head has to be on a swivel? That's what it has to be. Your head almost has to be able to turn 360 degrees at all times on the weak side, and you can't physically do that, obviously.

That level of discipline and focus is the highest level. That's what he requires your defense to be. Then he can score. He's proven he can score 41 against us, and he scored 50 plus in another playoff game.

You're in the Finals. You're going to be dealing with great players, great teams. You have to find a way to overcome it and make it difficult and do a lot of things that are tough.

**Q. You just mentioned Jimmy's workload on the defensive end. First game that was a lot of Gordon. Last game with Kevin going into the starting lineup that shifts a little bit. He spent a lot of time on Murray. Wondering the challenges Murray provides for Jimmy on that end and how you assess how he did in Game 2 on that end?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, Murray is just an electric playoff performer. It's not just Jimmy. Jimmy will shape shift. He is going to be on a lot of different guys in this series. That's just the way it goes, and he embraces all of those challenges. He'll be on 1 through 5 at some point. Murray will draw second defenders, third defenders. You have to pick him up beyond the three-point line. He's ignitable, as we saw in that fourth quarter. He can do it a lot of different ways against a lot of different coverages.

So you have to have some strong habits that you've developed over the course of the season.

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