

# NBA Finals: Heat vs. Nuggets

Thursday, June 8, 2023

Miami Heat

Coach Erik Spoelstra

Practice Day



**Q. Coach Mike McDaniel of the Miami Dolphins sent you a text, called adversity is an opportunity. Did you want to expound on that, your relationship with him and how you plan to use adversity being opportunity in Game 4 to make sure you guys get this win?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: It's been fun developing a relationship with him. We were fortunate enough to be able to spend a whole afternoon during training camp, see how they operate. Then in the afternoon, we ended up just talking shop. That's fun.

Obviously, he has been to a lot of our games. We've been texting back and forth. We share very similar thoughts about finding strength in adversity and using those as lessons to help you grow.

**Q. Tyler Herro, did he have his contact workout yet? And one thing I'm a little unclear of is he's been cleared for contact workouts but hasn't been cleared. Can you elucidate a little on the difference between the two?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, this is just part of the process. You have to go through stages. First part of it was just shooting, then movement, then contact versus coaches and then the next level of contact in practice. He has not been cleared for a game, and he is still not cleared yet.

**Q. Is there any weird consolation in you guys got, especially in the first half, a lot of shots in the paint that you liked that just didn't go down, Nikola had a historic performance, Jamal had a historic performance. It took a lot of things to not go your way last night, and a lot of them are correctable. Is there any strange comfort in that, that yes, it was a 15-point game, but there are some things that could change pretty easily tomorrow if you wanted them to?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, like a lot of these games, there are certain things that you like, and you think that you can continue to do those things. I liked our aggressive

attacking mentality.

Then there are things that we feel like we have to do better. This is great competition. Those two guys can manipulate your defense in different ways.

One of the biggest strengths we have is our competitive spirit, nature, just to overcome whatever, even if players play well or a team plays well, that we figure out how to get the win at the end. We were not able to do that. You do have to credit them.

Like I said after the game, the film also substantiated that, those areas, ball in the air, ball on the floor, 50/50 balls, the physicality parts of the game, for the most part they are winning those. Clearly the rebounding differential was probably the most glaring sign.

**Q. Coach, at this level when the stakes are so high, when you have a player like Tyler, how do you gauge honesty in terms of wanting to play, whether should you play? And where are his spirits at this point?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: His spirits are great because he is able to work out. Where he was five weeks ago, he wasn't able to shoot and do things that he wanted to do.

But he is a competitor. He wants to be out there. He was really excited at the beginning of this playoff run for the opportunity that we felt that we had with this team. But there's sometimes things that you can't control.

Right now he is not cleared to take that next step. He has checked every box so far, but he is not at that next step yet to clear for an NBA Finals game. But he is doing everything he needs to do to take these next steps.

**Q. That was the season high or tied the season high for Murray and Jokic pick-and-rolls last night. Did you feel like you got any better traction once you started putting two on the ball with Murray, and how dangerous can that be when the result could be Jokic getting the ball in space?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, whatever you do, you just can't



do it all the time. There's no absolutes when you get to this level. It's the highest level of competition. You're getting the highest level of execution. Understanding what they're trying to get to, and we try to get them out of their comfort zones as much as possible.

The first half, they really got to that two-man action quite a bit. They were getting a lot of traction, so they didn't need to go to any other part of their playbook. Second half, we did a little bit better with it.

Game 4 could be different. They may go to a different part of their menu. Whatever it is, we have to find a way to get the job done.

**Q. Seemed like Kyle was limping at the end of last night's game. Will he be on the injury report today?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: I don't know if he'll be on the report because I don't follow that. I think if you have a hangnail, you have to put that on the report. He slipped at the end. But he already did his shooting and his workout, so he is fine. He'll be ready to go.

**Q. Very interested in your career arc and becoming one of the premier coaches in the league that you're considered today. I'm wondering how different is this experience, this stage in your career, compared to when you first came up as a head coach working with LeBron and Dwyane Wade? How different do you feel in your own skin here in the Finals in comparison to your first Finals appearance as a head coach?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: All the experiences are different. You want to be fully present for the team and what is happening right now.

I've said this during this playoff run: The more experience you have, the more perspective you have about how difficult this really is. These are extremely difficult challenges. You end up being even more grateful for the opportunities to compete at the highest level.

That's what we all want. This is the stage that you want to be able to compete and have everything decided between those four lines and find out how your team stacks up.

But it is tough. It's tough going through the gauntlet of three rounds to get to this level. Then when you get to this level, it should be what it is. It's the highest level of competition. Our guys thrive in that. They love it. Even after games like last night, our guys love to compete and put it all out there.

**Q. Christian Braun was a guy you kind of picked on**

**during Game 2 during Duncan's run. Was he one of those benefactors of the 50/50 balls in the second half last night?**

ERIK SPOELSTRA: Yeah, there was a couple of those, but also the force he was playing with on cuts and drives and in transition. Those were X-factor points, for sure. Now he has had two games where he has been able to have an impact. Throughout the rotation, we have to make sure that we're getting positive minutes and winning more skirmishes than not. Last night, we lost the majority of those skirmishes.

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