

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

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Boston Celtics

Jayson Tatum

Media Day



Q. Jayson, there comes a point for great players where you get defined by whether or not you've won a championship. How much for you personally does it mean to get one? How much is that part of your motivation?

JAYSON TATUM: I would say part of my motivation is I just love to win. Understanding the moment that I know how hard it is to get to the Finals. You think that you're young, if you've been once, you'll continue to keep going. We realized that last year. We kind of took it for granted at certain moments. We didn't make it to the Finals.

This year, put things in perspective. I think you can see in our excitement when we won the conference. Obviously, that's not the end all, be all, but it really is tough to get to this moment.

I think right now just staying present in the moment. I'm not thinking about what it would mean for my legacy or anything like that. Just excited to play some basketball after this long break and go out there and try to get the job done.

Q. Jayson, even though you'd already won an Olympic gold medal, hundreds of games here, when you look back at '22, do you almost feel like you had to go through it to understand what's different about this stage and what it takes to win the ultimate thing in this league?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, I guess. I hate that I had to go through it. I wish we would have won.

But I'm a firm believer in everything happens for a reason. There's a lesson to be learned in every situation. I do. I do feel a lot different this time, this go-around, two years later. I'm excited for the opportunity for us to get the job done.

Q. Does this franchise have a different pressure on it with all the banners, with all the legends, trying to be amongst those names when it's all said and done, in

order to truly be there you have to win a championship to do that?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, you know the answer to that. Of course, right? We only hang NBA championship banners, right? 17 of them. Some of the greatest players to ever play this game wore this uniform. All of us are honored to follow in their footsteps, the way they paved for us to live out our dream.

Essentially, yeah, if you want to be one of the greats to put on this uniform, every great before you won a championship. That's what we try to play for every single season. The expectations are obviously different here. It takes special players to be here and to be a part of an environment like that.

Q. You guys bring in Jrue Holiday this offseason. He had the title run with Milwaukee. Does he offer a new perspective on the Finals that maybe you guys didn't realize when you had your run two years ago?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, with his presence in the locker room, obviously on the court, he just brings a different dynamic. I've said it all season. We're so lucky to have him on our team. Jrue literally does any and everything that we ask and that we need. More than that, he's capable, right? He can hit big shots, obviously get a big stop, guard the five man if we need him to.

So we're very, very lucky to have him.

Q. You've probably been the most scrutinized player during this postseason.

JAYSON TATUM: Think so (smiling)?

Q. I think so. Even to how much you smiled or didn't smile when Jaylen won the MVP, things like that, has that motivated you for this moment? Do you turn off social media when a fan says something? Your friends, your mother? How have you dealt with the scrutiny and how has this built you for this moment that you're about to face now?

JAYSON TATUM: I think more so than me, right, it's my



mom, my grandma, my family and friends. They're more bothered by it than me.

I understand, like, if Deuce was to make it to the NBA, people were talking about him every single day, as a parent, I wouldn't be able to separate the superstar from the child.

My mom took it a little tougher than maybe I did. But for me, I don't take it personal, right? Just a long break without NBA basketball, so they had to overanalyze every little thing, have something to talk about.

Did it get old? Yeah. But, you know, it's the Finals. They wouldn't talk about me if I wasn't good, so... Try to take some positives out of it and change the channel.

Q. You were talking a bit ago about sort of the legacy of this franchise, the weight that puts on you, not you personally but on any Celtics team. For you personally, is it helpful for you to think about the big expectations of the franchise? Is that motivating or do you prefer as you're going through the Playoffs to keep that out of your mind and think a little more narrowly about what's in front of you?

JAYSON TATUM: Yeah, honestly, I don't think about the future or what this may mean for me down the road. As simple as it sounds, just try to stay present, stay in the moment, enjoy it, right? Keep talking about pressure, pressure, pressure... It's the NBA Finals. This s--- is supposed to be fun.

That's kind of where I'm at with it. I'm in the NBA Finals. I have a second opportunity to win a championship. I want to enjoy it. I want to enjoy the moment, enjoy it with my teammates and my family.

So that's where my narrow focus is at, is about competing at a high level, finally getting to play tomorrow, just having fun. Just going out there and doing what I love to do.

Q. I feel like this league is a lot of expectations. You know what I'm saying? I'm going to try to shift it a little bit. What would you say to somebody going into their third year who hasn't lived up to the expectation that has been set on him? What would you say to somebody going into that?

JAYSON TATUM: I would say that somebody that has been through that, right? How old are you?

Q. 21.

JAYSON TATUM: I've been in that situation. Everybody

else in the world at your age at 21 is probably still in school, trying to figure out what they want to do in life.

We come into the league at such a young age, and they want us to be perfect right away. It's just part of growing up. You're still growing up. I'm still growing up.

It's a process, right? Nothing was accomplished overnight. I think you'll find a value in tough times, the ups and downs of just what life brings you.

I sound like a real old person right now (laughter).

In the sense of your career, I would say, man, enjoy it. There's going to be some great times. There's going to be some times that aren't so great. It's okay to be upset because that means you care, right? You want to be great. People believe that you can. They just try to rush the process.

It takes however long it takes. But as long as you work hard, you believe, you got the right support system. Obviously, you do down in Houston. I know all those guys, coaches. Everything will take care of itself, how it's supposed to.

Q. A lot of NBA legends lost their first Finals, then came back and won. What is the biggest lesson that you learned from the first NBA Finals that you played?

JAYSON TATUM: Biggest lesson? I give a lot of credit to that team, the Warriors. I think we understood what it took to get there. They understood what it took to get over the hump. That was really a special team that didn't make many mistakes, obviously well-coached.

They've just been there before. In some of those tough moments, when I go back and look, you can tell that they had been there before.

It was a lesson to be learned. I told myself that if I ever got the opportunity again to make it to the Finals, never take it for granted. Obviously, we're here now. Thankful to be here. I'm excited to get ready to play and have fun tomorrow.

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