

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Boston Celtics

Joe Mazzulla

Game 1: Postgame



Boston Celtics 107, Dallas Mavericks 89

Q. What led to going with Kristaps off the bench and what allowed him to get off to that start he did in the first half?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, just thought it gave us the best chance to win. He was great on both ends of the floor, defensive execution, game plan, playing for a spot in the offensive end, being physical, and making plays on both ends of the floor.

So I thought he played great and that's the KP that helped us get to where we are today.

Q. What did you see from Jayson and the pressure he kind of drew defensively and how he played around that?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, just poise. They have a great defensive system, great defensive team, throw a bunch of stuff at you, different spacings, different coverages. The poise to just figure it out. Make the right play is going to be the most important thing. I thought he had that throughout the game.

Q. The Mavs were able to cut it to eight in the third quarter. You guys respond with a 14-0 run. Kristaps is making plays during that run as well. How big was that moment and for him to continue his impact after that hot start?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, game management is going to be important. This is a great team. They have a tendency to go on great runs. That's going to happen. You have to be able to manage those with poise and execution, know why those runs are being made, and quickly put a stop to them with high-level execution.

So KP was a huge part of that, that run. But I liked the way we handled their run, because that's going to happen. You're not going to stop that. You just have to have the

poise and the toughness to work through it and I thought our guys did that.

Q. Jaylen was your leading scorer tonight, but defensively the three blocks guarding Luka in space, what can you say about his effort on that side of the ball?

JOE MAZZULLA: What you saw tonight is kind of the challenge he took for himself coming into the year. Not wanting to be defined by one thing. Wanting to make plays. Wanted to be a well-rounded player and get better and better. So his spacing, his ball movement, his defense on ball and off ball.

Usually when you give up a run and your offense gets a little stagnant, your defense goes with it. Tonight our defense kept us in it and that's really important, to have that defensive mindset. Some of those plays that Jaylen made were a part of that.

Q. You mentioned the ball movement. Curious what you've seen in terms of when Jayson or Jaylen draw two, the ability to kick out and get the machine moving?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I think a couple of great passes. JT stuck out, the one Jaylen threw to AI in the corner. I think it was either Jaylen or JT. But that's what those guys do, they have the ability to draw two guys and the most important thing is making the right play over and over again, doing what's best for the team, reading the two on ones, and when they're at their best, those guys are able to do that. I thought their decision making helped control the game, especially when they went on that run and we were able to get that back. We went back to -- with JT there and he was able to help us sustain that with a high-level execution, so that's really important when those guys do that.

Q. When did you make the decision to bring Kristaps off the bench and did you have to have a conversation with him about that and how did that go?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I always talk to the players about what we think is best for the team and that it's that.



Q. When did you make that decision?

JOE MAZZULLA: I don't know. I can't remember.

Q. Back to the timeout. What did you say, what did you see when they came off the court? Can you sort of take us back to that?

JOE MAZZULLA: The one when they cut it to eight? Yeah, listen, it's the NBA Finals, you're playing against a great team and they're going to make runs. Just building on awareness to why the run was made and, you know, that team does a great job of making defensive adjustments on the fly and sometimes it takes us a possession or two to recognize that.

So just understanding the run, what could we do to change it, and how can we get better coming out of that. So I thought the guys' poise out of that timeout was big and that's going to happen. They're going to go on more runs and we're going to have to fight through 'em.

Q. So the timeout ends, they go back out to the court before you go on that run. Did you feel at that moment when the timeout ended that your message had been received?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah.

Q. A couple things you preach consistently, your physicality and also details. What did you see in Game 1 in that regard on both sides of the basketball, particularly with the physicality and meeting their physicality?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, again, I thought our defensive mindset, our defensive execution, our defensive game plan, our positioning, we had the right intentions and I thought we played really physical, for the most part, defending without fouling.

And on the offensive end, we made some physical drives, and so that's the key there, is just having the physical mindset on both ends of the floor.

Q. Porzingis's impact on offense obviously was significant, but perhaps even more impactful defensively what he was able to do around the rim?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, listen, I know the story line has to be, what's he going to look like because he was off for a month, but that's what he's been doing his whole career. He's a great player. He's been great for us. The reason why we are here is because of what he's done. It doesn't

matter how long he takes off, the guy is going to make plays because of how talented he is and the work he puts in. What he did for us tonight was big and we need that for the rest of the series.

Q. When the Mavs were making their big run, your guys' offensive sort of -- I don't want to stalled out a little bit, but you weren't getting easy buckets. Did you see something that they changed that caused that or was it you guys just not making the same shots?

JOE MAZZULLA: Um-hmm, yes.

Q. And then, you mentioned the timeout. You said you just talked to them, you explained that -- was there anything any of the guys said during that timeout or on that time to each other?

JOE MAZZULLA: Out of the three minutes, two and a half of it they're by themselves, so I'm sure -- they communicate well with each other, they have great relationships, so I'm sure during the time the coaches are meeting that they're having that communication with each other. They do a good job of communicating with each other throughout the game.

Q. You've continually stressed the importance of defense. They didn't have a 25-point quarter tonight. What did you like on the defensive end tonight?

JOE MAZZULLA: Just sticking with the game plan. Game plan execution's very important. Having a clear understanding of what you have to take away on every possession, and just knowing that in order to defend these guys at a high level, you have to play efficient offense, and I thought we did that for the majority of the game, obviously, on the run. There weren't many live ball turnovers and we missed some open shots. They forced us into a couple tough shots, but we were able to manage the transitions of the game with our offensive execution and our defensive game plan.

Q. You guys took away two of their preferred methods of scoring, lobs and corner threes, they didn't make a corner three until the final minute of the game and only attempted three overall. What was the key to just sustaining that and taking away those sources of offense?

JOE MAZZULLA: Listen, they're going to make a lot of adjustments and they're going to do a lot of great things because of the talent that they have, so we have to execute the game plan, communicate coverages, communicate matchups, guys did a great job communicating to each other and keeping defense first.

Q. You held the team the Mavericks to a total of nine assists during the game. I think Luka had one assist, Kyrie had two assists. What was the key to that stifling their passing lanes and stifling their play-making abilities?

JOE MAZZULLA: Just great individual defense. Everybody has to take on the challenge of guarding those guys. They're an amazing team and they put a ton of pressure on you with their ability to score. Everyone is going to take their matchup personal, have personal pride in individual defense.

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