

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Sunday, June 9, 2024

Boston Celtics

Joe Mazzulla

Game 2: Postgame



Boston Celtics 105, Dallas Mavericks 98

Q. How much more equipped does Jayson look to kind of handle some of the shooting struggles he's having to start the series vs. two years ago against Golden State, with the passing and everything else that he's doing? And how important was it having Jrue in that dunker's spot for him to have a little bit of an outlet there in that first half?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, before that, I think the play of the game can't go unnoticed, the humility of our team, is Payton's shot at the end of the quarter. You see guys around the league pass up on that shot or fake like they want to take it, so that their numbers don't get messed up. He takes pride in taking that, and that's winning basketball. So that's the first and foremost.

That should have been the first question, is the ability of everybody on our team to do different things that lead to winning. I'm really tired of hearing about one guy or this guy or that guy and everybody trying to make it out to be anything other than Celtic basketball. Everybody that stepped on that court today made winning plays on both ends of the floor, is the most important thing.

To answer your question, Jayson makes greatness look easy. He does it in a lot of different ways. He does it on defense, he does it on rebounding, he does it on passing, he does it on screening. He's a tremendous player and not hard to coach him. When he has the ability to affect the game in different ways, we're a different team. But it takes everybody to do it. That should answer everyone's question.

Q. That being said, was there an emphasis for Jayson to play more of a distributor role tonight? It seemed like that was kind of his personal agenda out there.

JOE MAZZULLA: The emphasis and where he's grown over the last two years is to take what the defenses give him and learn to impact the game in many different ways.

Because of the type of team that we've had, especially this year, he's seen a bunch of different coverages and he's seen different matchups because teams have to match up with him. So coming into a game, it's kind of similar to a puzzle and he's done a great job learning how to solve the puzzle and do different things.

Tonight, with the way that they were rotating and the way that they were defending, the most important thing was making the right play at the rim. We were able to stay out of transition because our guys made that. So I thought he did a tremendous job doing what the game called for.

Q. You guys trailed at the end of the first quarter. Luka had 13. Drew ended up outscoring Luka in quarters 2 through 4. What allowed you guys to get him going on offense? And obviously, as you mentioned, a lot of your guys can do a lot of different things for you, but when a guy like Luka has it going like that, how much of a boost is it to get an extra scoring boost from a guy like Jrue?

JOE MAZZULLA: Listen, you got to take a look at -- we gave up a 26-point first quarter and then three 25-point quarters. In the 26-point first quarter, we messed up the two for one and fouled a three-point shooter for three free throws. Luka gets two shooting free throws, we give up a transition basket to P.J. Washington, P.J. Washington hits an above-the-break three. That's almost 70 percent of the points there. So, like, the game was going the way we wanted it to go outside of the things that we can control. I thought our guys took the poise and remained in the mindset and the toughness to understand that.

And then Jrue, it's connected and that's what people don't realize, is like every guy on our team can't be at their best if this guy doesn't do that. So Jayson's facilitating, Jaylen's decision-making. That leads to Jrue's playmaking, and the way that they're defending us, we have to make multiple plays. We have to have multiple drives. I think Jrue did a great job -- guys did a great job finding him, he did a great job attacking closeouts and then either kicking it back out for a second drive or getting an open shot. And then what he can do defensively. It just goes back to everybody on the team works to impact the game differently every single night.



Q. On the play that Tatum was blocked at the rim, Derrick ran from the Mavericks in front of the Mavericks bench and caught Washington. That's kind of, that's --

JOE MAZZULLA: That was sick.

Q. Yeah, it's uncanny.

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah.

Q. We agree on that. What is it about him? He just makes an intangible play, he hits the 27-footer to beat the shot clock, like it just seems like he's so reliable. Can you touch on that?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, I think it just comes back to he's not defined by one thing. He's just a little bit of everything. He can handle a pick-and-roll, he can score in pick-and-roll, he can stay spaced. He's not defined by scoring. He rebounds, he plays defense, he can play pick-and-roll, ball handling, the pick-and-roll screener. He's had blocks on bigs. So he's just another guy that's selfless and wants to impact the game in any way that he can, and it looks different every night.

I think the thing about him is the confidence that he has to maybe go some possessions or a half or -- because teams are guarding us differently, his frequency can be impacted because of that at times. But he just fights to impact the game in different ways.

Q. When a team is struggling shooting from three, there might be a tendency to say, okay, we're just going to drive it. You guys continued to, when you did drive it, make those right reads, despite that. What kind of discipline does it take to not get into that thing of, like, forcing missed layups that you keep talking about that could trigger another team's run and to keep kicking it out and eventually a couple of huge threes fall down at the end?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, listen, the most important thing is getting a good shot and not turning it over. So in the first half, even though miss and our points per shot was much higher than theirs, I liked every shot that we took. That's the most important thing, is take what the defense gives you, whether it's a layup or three.

The second piece to that was our offensive rebounding. So I think we had an offensive rebounding rate in the first half of, like, 41 percent, and it died down in the second half. But when you're not shooting it well, you still want to make the right plays so that it doesn't impact the other end

of the floor. But you have to have the offensive rebounding capacity to get extra possessions, and I thought we did a really good job of that in the first half and hit some timely ones in the second half.

Q. Did Porzingis re-aggravate the calf and what's your concern level for him for Game 3?

JOE MAZZULLA: No, he's good.

Q. You touched on it briefly, but the buzzer beater that Pritchard hit, huge shot, his only make of the night. What makes you trust him in those moments?

JOE MAZZULLA: He has the humility and selflessness to not care if he misses it. He practices it and has an understanding of how a shot like that can impact the end of a quarter and it can impact the run that a team makes. So they had went on a run to end the quarter, and I thought that shot kind of gave us a little bit of poise and a little bit of momentum that we needed heading into the fourth quarter. That was big-time.

Q. You subbed Payton in right before that. Was the plan for him to run up and take that shot?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah. Yeah. He takes pride in that, yes.

Q. You guys -- you pride yourself on process a lot as a team. Obviously, on a night where you didn't hit a lot of shots, especially from deep, the offense kept moving, you kept trusting the shots, and he hit a couple late. Did you like the way you guys stuck with that?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yeah, because you have to look at the other side of the coin. If you get away from the discipline and doing what you do in those situations, it's going lead to other things, and it goes to the trust that the guys have in each other. So as long as you're taking great shots, you have to trust the process.

On the back end of that, you got to have your offensive rebounding rate to help you. When things aren't going that way, you have to keep them off the free-throw line, which we didn't do a great job of, but we had three 25-point quarters.

So usually what happens is you have those empty possessions on the offensive end, your defense starts to weigh in or you start to mistrust the discipline of your spacing and your shot selection, and you end you giving transition and getting cross-matched. So the guys trusted and stayed discipline and we were able to stay out of

cross-matches and we were able to kind of keep the game
in the way we wanted to play it.

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