

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Sunday, June 9, 2024

Dallas Mavericks

Kyrie Irving

Game 2: Postgame



Boston Celtics 105, Dallas Mavericks 98

Q. Kyrie, what is your overall assessment of how you guys performed today? Where did you see growth, and why was it still ultimately not enough?

KYRIE IRVING: I mean, we beat ourselves a little bit tonight just on our turnovers and just some of our defensive rotations. They got a lot of opportunities, second-chance opportunities, where they got an opportunity to go into the fast break and just create just mismatches in transition.

Look at some of the positives for sure where we won the first and fourth. But at the end of the day, we've got to win all four quarters if we want a great chance against this team. And we have to make sure that we create enough separation where we can play comfortably, too, and freely.

So we had a good pulse about the game, I believe, going up until halftime. And then afterwards, you know, they did what other great teams do, you know, where they put their foot on the gas pedal, started pushing a little bit more, penetrating down the lane a little bit more and creating some opportunities at the free throw line. And they converted tonight, 19-for-20.

So you've got to give them credit. They definitely picked up their defensive pressure, but finally we got some great looks as well.

It's definitely a great test for us. They did what they had to do. They won both games at home, and now it's our job to go home and win both games at home.

Q. Home-court advantage is something that gets talked about a lot especially from a media standpoint. As a player, is that something that you guys can lean into as the series shifts back to Dallas?

KYRIE IRVING: You want to take advantage of playing in front of your home crowd, feeling confident and being able

to play in a familiar place. And like I said, they handled what they were supposed to do, first two games, and now it's our job to go home and handle our business.

But you've got to give them credit. They kept competing. We kept competing. We've just got to stay together in some of the tough times throughout the game where it could be a four-point lead on them or four-point lead that we have. We just have to keep competing, and I think we'll be in a better place. But feel good.

Q. Looked like you were in a good flow first half, 5-of-10, and second half, 2-of-8. Did they change anything in terms of the way they defended you? And also, through the two games, you got some really good looks from three. Do you feel like it's only a matter of time before those go down?

KYRIE IRVING: Yeah, that's the confidence that I have in myself. A lot of shots were hitting the back rim. That could piss you off as a competitor, but it's all part of the game of basketball.

And you have to accept the ups and downs of this. That's, I would say, the toughest challenge when you're in a series. You want to play extremely well, especially when you're playing in a Finals.

A little disappointed in myself not being able to convert a lot more on my opportunities that I have in the lane. Obviously, I'm going against Jrue Holiday and Jaylen Brown a few times, but I feel like I have the upper edge on certain possessions where I've just got to convert. They are pushing me to my left end a little bit more. I have to be aware of some of their adjustments like I was in Game 1. Felt good in the first half, but second half the shots weren't going down. Defensively I was out of position and got some ticky-tack fouls and took away from our flow of the game as well.

It wasn't all on me, but I'm definitely taking the majority of it because my teammates look to me to convert a lot of these shots and ease the burden of not just Luka but everyone else and settle our team. We definitely made our dinner on the defensive end, but now offensively I have to play better.



Q. When Luka was in here, he pointed to his turnovers and missed free throws, he said those were the reasons you guys lost the game. Curious your reaction to Luka taking the blame and specifically saying those two things?

KYRIE IRVING: We talked about this last series, he did something similar. But when you're in the Finals and you're taking the brunt of the accountability, he definitely -- he's in the right for wanting to single himself out.

But this is a team game. He's not alone, and we are going to tell him that. As expected, he's fresh off the court. He's spilling into his emotions, feels like he could play better, just like me.

I would take the brunt of the responsibility. The first two games weren't the best for me, especially him scoring 25-plus the points, getting rebounds, getting assists, doing the intangibles, and for me I've always felt responsible for getting other guys comfortable out there, too.

It's on all of us. I'm pretty sure if you hear what everybody has to say, they will say that they can do something better.

But I think the message right now is just get our bearings together. We lost by seven points. We don't want to take the total number back home and say we are proud of that. We don't want to do that. We want to go home and be prepared to win games, and in order to do that, we have to be ready to defend this good Boston Celtics team.

Q. How important is it for you guys to attack in transition and avoid halfcourt offense?

KYRIE IRVING: It's just adjusting to the pace. They are playing a great style of basketball, a great brand of basketball where they are pushing in transition. Sometimes those opportunities don't come as often or as easy. They have guys backloaded. They have a lot of guys that are athletic and running back in transition.

You saw when P.J. had an opportunity to cut it to five, you saw Derrick White contest him at the rim. You saw Derrick White over there again contesting against D-Lively, even though he got dunked on, he still came over there and contested. That's what they have been doing. They have a lot of pride on that end. And they are not going to be easy on us.

So on the fastbreak component, we definitely can create more opportunities for ourselves when we are in Dallas and look forward to doing that.

Q. Towards the end of the third quarter, you cut the lead to six, Payton Pritchard hits that halfcourt buzzer beater, and then the Luka play where Jrue jumps in the passing lane and get a steal and get a three out of it. Does it feel like you're close and those plays, those moments, tilt the scales that much more away from you guys?

KYRIE IRVING: Yeah, I just chalk that up to just being in Boston. You know, some of those shots, they go up in the air, and I remember last game Sam Hauser caught it in the corner, and I don't think he even brought the ball down. It was practically all net.

They feel very confident here. They have been a great team all year. Look at their record, I don't know how many total games they have lost since the postseason started. But I don't think it's more than six or seven.

So they have really made their identity here. They want to take care of home court. And now it's our job to go home and do the same. Being in the Finals before, down 0-2, I have a little experience in this. Didn't play particularly well in the first two games in that series, too, that I'm referring to [in 2016].

So now I'm just really leaning in on what I've experienced, what I've learned and some of the lessons I've been able to make sense of in how to come back in this series because it is going to be a possession-by-possession thing, and it is going to be the hardest thing that we've ever done.

So I think we've got a great feel, a great experience here in Boston of what the Finals is like for our group. Now we go home and shake off the cobwebs a bit and prepare for another fight.

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