

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Monday, June 17, 2024

Boston Celtics

Jayson Tatum

Game 5: Postgame



Boston Celtics 106, Dallas Mavericks 88

Q. Jayson, you guys have been through a lot over the past several years. As the final couple minutes tick off the game, you're on the bench going through the handshake line with everybody. What was going through your mind?

JAYSON TATUM: It's a surreal feeling. Still has not really kicked in yet. Just trying, I guess, to enjoy the moment. I kept saying, "Wow."

These last seven years have been a roller coaster, up and down. I had to listen to all the s--- that people said about me, and tonight, it was worth it. Oh, my God.

Q. You pictured this, I'm sure, as a kid growing up, probably pretending to win championships on a hoop somewhere. Is there anything from that that compares to this moment?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, maybe getting drafted. That's something that you dream about. But this is at the top of the mountain. To be able to say we did it, that we came together and we won a championship. Banner No. 18 has been hanging over our head for so many years. To know that we're going to be engraved in history, and it still hasn't like registered. I'm just still trying to process it all.

But we did it. We won a championship.

Q. Curious to know what you said to Deuce; but I'm more curious, what did Deuce say to you?

JAYSON TATUM: He told me that I was the best in the world. I said, "You're damn right I am."

Q. I mean, how long do you think it will take to hit you? This is a career-defining accomplishment.

JAYSON TATUM: Say that again.

Q. Career-defining accomplishment.

JAYSON TATUM: Please say that again (laughter).

Q. It's been a long seven years. You're not 19 anymore. What's going through your mind, all the tough times, growing up in St. Louis, coming here and finally getting to the top?

JAYSON TATUM: That it was -- it was -- all the sacrifice was worth it. I'm so thankful to have been in the positions that I was growing up. Thankful for my mom. Thankful for my dad introducing me to basketball. My grandmother who helped raise me. All my friends and family that have supported me, every coach, every teammate that I've had.

There's a lot of people that have had a hand in the success of Jayson Tatum. So I guess in this moment, I'm just very thankful for everybody that supported me in the highest of moments and in the lowest of moments. I'm very, very appreciative of that.

Q. Given that this is a night you'll remember forever, what does it mean to you to have had the game that you had tonight, to not only win but to have been aggressive and to have played the way that you played in a championship winning game?

JAYSON TATUM: I mean, this is going to be a night that I will remember for the rest of my life, from the game, the celebration, these moments.

You know, over the last couple years, we had some tough losses at home in the playoffs. We've lost the NBA Championship at home in front of our fans. We had a chance to beat Miami in Game 6 a few years ago and lost that one.

So to have a big win, the biggest win that you could have in front of your home crowd, I felt like that was really important to go out there and do everything in my power to make sure we won this game tonight.

Q. I know you've talked a lot about Kobe Bryant as one of your idols and someone you pattern your game after and your motivation after. Once you finally win a

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championship, now you can say, I know what it took, right? What did it actually take? Was it something you learned from Kobe? Something you learned on your own throughout this journey? What did it take to get over the hump?

JAYSON TATUM: It took being relentless. It took being on the other side of this and losing in the Finals and being at literally the lowest point in a basketball career that you could be, to next year, to the following year, thinking that was going to be the time, and come up short again.

So, I mean, people have said it before. But coming up short and having failures makes this moment that much better. Because you know what it feels like to lose. You know what it feels like to be on the other side of this and be in the locker room and hearing the other team celebrating, hearing them celebrate on your home floor. That was devastating.

And now, to elevate yourself in a space that, you know, all your favorite players are in, everybody that they consider greats or legends have won a championship, and all of the guys I looked up to won a championship, multiple championships.

So now I can, like, walk in those rooms and be a part of that. It's a hell of a feeling. This is more -- I dreamed about what it would be like, but this is 10 times better.

Q. When Jaylen won the finals MVP, the first thing he did was look at you and said, "We did this together." What did that mean to you?

JAYSON TATUM: First of all, congrats to him. Well-deserved. Extremely happy for him. This is a hell of an accomplishment.

The main goal for us was to win a championship. We weren't -- we didn't care who got Finals MVP. I know that I need him through this journey and he needs me.

So, you know, it was great to see him have that moment and share that moment with him. I'm extremely happy for him. Well-deserved. That was big-time. He earned that.

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